From Barrymore To Bergman

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From Under

My Hat

HEDDA HOPPER

Author of
THE WHOLE TRUTH AND NOTHING BUT

MB
A MACFADDEN BOOK

To My Mother,

Who was an Angel on Earth

A MACFADDEN BOOK

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From Under My Hat

1

Once upon a time there was a six-toed cousin. Mine. When I first saw him, I knew I was in show business. Kids in the neighborhood couldn't afford pennies, but I made them pay five pins every time they got a look at him.

At the time when my six-toed cousin and I were in business, I was Elda Furry. I was born in Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania, a peaceful, pretty town fourteen miles outside the industrial city of Altoona. In the West we'd call it a suburb, although the Hollidaysburg citizens might want to hang me for using that term.

I made my entrance into this world June 2 (I'll skip the year because I don't want anyone following me around with a wheel chair) during one of the gaudiest electrical storms ever seen in the community. The heavens opened up and so did I. It is said that I came in screaming. Mother didn't rightly know which was making the most noise, but she found out soon enough. The elements quit, but I didn't.

Born with good lungs, I've never stopped exercising them. Today I can outshout any producer in Hollywood.

When I was three we moved to Altoona. My growing pains were done to the rhythm of hard work; I never had it easy. What school learning I got was as sketchy as my knowledge of men. I didn't make a high school, and boys didn't seem to like me much. I had only one beau in Altoona, but I won't fool you, I've had several since.

When life became intolerable at home, I ran away to New York and went on the stage. There I met De Wolf Hopper. Inasmuch as I left home to escape the heritage of being a butcher's daughter, it seems ironical that I was to spend the rest of my life dealing in ham.

But for De Wolf Hopper, this book would never have been written. Life with him was a liberal education. He set my feet upon the way.

To me Hopper was something special, something new under the sun. I had been on the stage only a few years when I joined his company. His massive size, his voice, his storytelling gift—Wolfie was a six-foot-three riot. From the moment I saw him he fascinated me.

To him I was a new audience. I was as fresh as an unhatched egg. He enjoyed the attention he got from his raw recruit, went all out to give a continuous performance. I drank in his every word as though it were Holy Writ. I was in his company several seasons. We toured the country from one end to the other.

I was still in the chorus, though I had gotten a little more hep by this time. Dancing came easier for me. In singing, what my voice lacked in quality it made up in volume.

While I was in Wolfie's company I made the discovery that chorus and understudy jobs weren't acting. I knew I just had to act. And I'd have to go out and prove myself before I could hope to get anywhere in the theater.

Hearing that Edgar Selwyn was casting his play *The Country Boy* for a road tour, I went to his office and asked him to give me the leading part.

"Why, my girl, you're too tall!" He laughed. "The male lead is only a medium-sized man."

I kicked my shoes off. I didn't know there was a hole in my stocking. "Look—I'm not really so tall—it's the heels——"

Edgar liked that, or at least it amused him. "All right, all right, I'll try you out. Here's the part. Rehearsals start in a week——" Such and such a theater, such and such a time.

We went touring for thirty-five weeks. Audiences gave me confidence, and I got the feel of acting. I loved it. I could hardly wait for the time to put on make-up for each performance—and for the applause. While I was on tour Wolfie wrote to me regularly. We toured *The Country Boy* through the forty-eight states.

By the time I got back to New York I had made another discovery. Now it was acting which wasn't enough for me. I'd have to get into a musical, and also I'd have to be a prima donna.

I studied singing all summer and in the fall went out with *The Quaker Girl;* not as the Quaker Girl but as second lead, the prima-donna part. I saved the notices I got that year for singing. There weren't many—barely enough to fill three pages of a scrapbook—but I valued them because I knew my limitations. They were the only notices I ever kept.

Rehearsals for *The Quaker Girl* were at the Hudson Theatre on Forty-fourth Street just off Sixth Avenue. In winter the janitor doubled as doorman, opening carriage doors. One day he was sweeping the sidewalk when I came out of the theater after after rehearsal. He leaned on his broom, smiled kindly at me, and said, "Oh, miss, you've got the most

beautiful voice I've ever listened to." I knew how wrong he was, but I needed that kind of encouragement just then. I hadn't cultivated aggressiveness and a sharp tongue yet; I did that later, turning aside approval or flattery because, having been without it so long while growing up, I never learned really to accept it—or believe it at all. Still, for years after that I'd walk blocks out of my way to greet that janitor and shake his hand.

In every town we played *The Quaker Girl* a letter from Wolfie would be waiting for me; and how he hated to write! The people in the company were dying to know who my faithful swain was. They knew that Wolfie and I had been friendly when I was in his company, but I never had mentioned him by name. Just let 'em guess. They say women can't keep a secret. Well, I did. But the strain on me was so great I've never been able to keep one since.

The Quaker Girl closed in Albany. The afternoon before the last performance I went to a jewelry store on a most personal errand. "Please show me your wedding rings," I said.

The jeweler looked interested. "For a lady?"

"For a lady," I replied, not batting an eye. His eyebrows up, he got out the tray.

"This one," I said. "How much?"

He told me, adding, as he watched me out of the corner of his eye, "How shall I engrave it?"

"That will be taken care of later," I said, giving him no satisfaction. "Just put the ring in a box." He did, and I gave him the twenty-three dollars. It paid for itself over many years. I used to wear that ring when I played married women in movies.

The curtain was rung down on our last performance, the scenery struck, and no one—not even the company manager—had the faintest idea they wouldn't be seeing me at the train for New York the following morning.

I got up before daylight and took the milk train at 5 A.M. Wolfie met me at Grand Central Station in New York. Harris, his chauffeur for twenty-two years, drove us over to Jersey. The man who performed the marriage ceremony mumbled his words, I remember, and I'm certain the whole thing didn't take more than a minute and a half. I read the marriage ceremony years later. It's beautiful; I didn't know how beautiful at the time.

We climbed into the car and Harris drove us back to New York.

Wolfie was then living at the Algonquin Hotel; it was

handy to the Lambs Club. We weren't going to announce the marriage right away, so Hopper confided in his dear friend hotelman Frank Case, and Frank arranged the rooms next to Wolfie's for me, with a connecting door.

As soon as we got upstairs Hopper gave me a hasty kiss, said jauntily, "Well, see you later," and left. He was rehearsing in *Iolanthe* at the old Casino Theatre and the production was to open in four days.

He played the Lord Chancellor, and in the circumstances one of those Willy Gilbert lyrics he had to sing was really something. It goes like this:

> For I'm not so old, and not so plain,
> And I'm quite prepared to marry again,
> But there'd be the deuce to pay in the Lords
> If I fell in love with one of my Wards!
> Which rather tries my temper, for
> I'm *such* a susceptible Chancellor! *

Even as enthusiastic a patron of marriage as De Wolf Hopper would have the grace to feel a little diffident about facing the drama critics singing such sentiments when he had just taken on his fifth bride, who was young enough to be his daughter.

With Wolfie busy at rehearsals, I telephoned our friend Mrs. Derby Farrington. We were both devoted to her and called her by a pet name, BB. The theater fascinated her. One season she traveled with Wolfie's company. She was born Alice Miller Ramsdell, of Buffalo.

"BB," I said, "can you come over at once to the Algonquin? Got something important to tell you."

When she arrived I held up my hand with the ring on it.

"Oh, Elda—don't tell me! Does that mean what I think?"

"It sure does. I was married this morning."

"To—whom?" she faltered.

"To Wolfie."

"Oh no!" and she burst into tears. "Darling," she wailed, "do you know what you've done?"

"I think so. Why?"

"But—your age—Wolfie's older than your own father. What are people going to say?"

"What does it matter what they say? I love him." But

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instead of hearing happy good wishes I spent the rest of the day drying the tears of our friend BB.

That night we had a little wedding supper in Wolfie's rooms. Bayard Veiller came; he wrote *Within the Law,* and at one time had been Wolfie's press agent. Frank Case was there, with Bertha Grayson, who later became Mrs. Case. We could depend on these friends not to let the news leak out. Wolfie cracked a bottle of champagne, told wonderful stories, and sang scraps from Gilbert and Sullivan.

Together BB and I went to the opening of *Iolanthe.* Wolfie was a great hit. He never turned a hair (how could he? He didn't have any) when he came to those telltale lines, though he did have that sly look which should have warned all and sundry that he was getting away with something special.

I finally telegraphed the glad tidings to my parents back in Altoona. Seizing on his position as parent, my father threatened to horsewhip Wolfie and issued a pompous statement to the press:

> The Furrys for generations have revered the sacredness of the marriage vow [he proclaimed], and the report that my daughter Elda has married De Wolf Hopper pains me greatly. If Hopper loves my daughter and means well I will be satisfied. But if he married her like he took up with his other four wives, as he would a plaything, it will be an outrage that her old dad will not stand for!

That was my dad, a fast man with the wrong words! The idea of his horsewhipping anyone was a joke. He couldn't have squashed a horsefly if it had been under his thumb. But he made headlines, and New Yorkers got the biggest belly laugh of that year.

When in New York, I had lived at the Three Arts Club, off Riverside Drive on Eighty-fifth Street. When Deaconess Hall, the housemother, read the news of my marriage she wouldn't believe it. "Elda just wouldn't do that without telling me," she said anxiously. When she learned that Elda had, a gap the width of the Mississippi widened between us. But, bless her good soul, Deaconess Hall was of a forgiving nature; in a few weeks she gave me her blessing.

In a way I missed the club. Some of the girls became fine actresses. When Gilda Varesi made a success of Brock Pemberton's first play, *Enter Madame,* it was a thrill I wonder any of us survived.

Fannie Hurst, then just beginning to bloom as a writer, came in every day for lunch. She could afford a hotel room, so the deaconess wouldn't let her live at the club, but she could buy her lunch there. Another lunch member was Margaret Wilson, daughter of President Wilson. She sang quite well but later veered away from the idea of a career and went to India to study Indian philosophies.

The one who became the most famous of all, as actress-playwright, was Ruth Gordon, now Mrs. Garson Kanin. She and her husband have written some of our best plays and pictures. And when the great designer Mainbocher produced and maintained Ruth's wardrobe, she became a fashion plate. She changed so I didn't recognize her. When she lived at the club she was a drab little sparrow that everyone felt sorry for. If possible, her wardrobe was scantier than mine.

The present generation doesn't know De Wolf Hopper except through their fathers, who remember and envy his recitation of *Casey at the Bat.*

De Wolf Hopper could have been a great citizen—lawyer, basso profundo—and I'm certain he would have if his father had lived. But his father died of sunstroke when Wolfie was five, and from then on the boy got everything he wanted.

His father John was a son of the great Quaker, Isaac Tatem Hopper, a Philadelphia lawyer who did as much to free the slaves as any man except Abraham Lincoln and William Lloyd Garrison.

John eloped with Rosalie De Wolf, daughter of a wealthy Rhode Island retired sea captain. Nowadays their old mansion belongs to the Colts, the firearms family. Neither the De Wolfs nor the Hoppers blessed the marriage of John and Rosalie.

Wolfie, first name William, was born after his parents had been married twelve years. They showered him with that overaffection which results from terror that there would never be a child. He often said to me, "My mother loved me not wisely but too well; I wouldn't have been such a spoiled brat if my father had lived."

In 1858, when Wolfie was born there, the Bowery was the social heart of New York City. Its name came from the great trees lining the streets, which met overhead in a beautiful bower.

The young lawyer Joseph H. Choate, later our Ambassador to the Court of St. James's, stood as Wolfie's godfather. When Mr. Choate had arrived in New York to practice law the John Hoppers had been the first family to welcome him, and

the two men became close and devoted friends. It was planned at the christening that when Wolfie was old enough he would be apprenticed to Mr. Choate in law.

After the father's death Rosalie Hopper indulged her boy beyond all reason. I remember his explaining, "I always just took for granted the best of everything. If there was steak for dinner, naturally I would get the tenderloin. When things like that keep up for years you don't realize you're just a pampered nuisance; you take it as only your due."

School lessons bored him, and when it came time for him to go to college he went in the front door at Harvard and straight out the back, and his law career exited with him.

After Wolfie took part in an amateur performance of *Conscience* in 1878 at the old Lyceum Theatre on Fourteenth Street, Rosalie Hopper resigned herself to the way things were going. In later years she made over her entire fortune to her son, so that he would have no material obstacles in pursuing his career. She would have liked him to follow law, but the main thing was for the boy to have what he wanted.

Having tasted blood in *Conscience*, Wolfie spent the next summer studying all the young romantic roles he could lay hands on. In August he was signed to the role of Talbot Champneys in a play called *Our Boys*.

Wolfie was the first to estimate his own professional debut. "I played the role without seriously disturbing the equilibrium of the drama," he would say with his great, rich laughter.

Nevertheless, the next season found him with a part in *Our Daughters*. His next engagement, *One Hundred Wives*, marked both his first personal financial backing of a show and his first marriage. She was a second cousin. Both were stage-struck. Each was afraid that some charmer would come along and, in the name of love, kidnap them into marriage, destroying their respective careers.

They hit upon the idea of marrying each other for protection against romance.

BB was right: Wolfie was older than my father, four years older when I married him. Consumed with the passion to be an actress, I had never cared a great deal for men, and not at all for young men, with whom I had no common meeting ground anyway, thanks to my brothers' failure to take me anywhere or see that I had any agreeable associations with boys.

But when Wolfie spoke you forgot his age. Every woman he ever won fell in love with his voice. It was like some great

church organ. This giant of a man was all music and traded joyously on his voice. It could make you laugh, it could make you cry, and it didn't matter which—you just knew it was wonderful.

Never was there a more instinctive storyteller. He realized, too, the dry rot of a story too often retold, and would alter his yarns a trifle here and there, to make them seem fresh and new. And woe betide you if you didn't laugh! Wolfie could tolerate being yesed, but it was unendurable to him not to be laughed with. Yet he was really an easygoing man; rages were just too much bother, except in rare instances.

Wolfie lived by night. But he preferred the company of cronies, and it was practically impossible to snare him to a cabaret—that's what they called them in those days, remember?

I do recall one exception. We were in Chicago with *The Matinee Idol*—before we were married—and Vernon and Irene Castle were opening.

This green-as-grass kid from Altoona pleaded with Wolfie: "I want to go; I've never seen the Castles."

"Get someone else to take you," he groaned. But when he saw that I wouldn't he pulled himself together and we went. The Castles just then were the prairie fire of show business, and that night people hung from the rafters. It was the first time I ever saw a Lucile dress. Lady Duff-Gordon's clothes made Irene Castle a world-renowned fashion plate.

Everybody was there; the Chauncey Olcotts, the Raymond Hitchcocks, Fritz Kreisler, and the famous dancer Maurice. Someone asked Kreisler to play, and he got up, borrowed a fiddle from the orchestra, stood there and played. Hitchy sang a song from *The Red Widow* and, of course, everyone screamed for Wolfie to do *Casey at the Bat*. He obliged.

His identification with *Casey* began in 1890, when he was the star of *Castles in the Air*, playing at the Broadway Theatre in New York. One day he received a piece of paper on which a man named Archibald Clavering Gunter had copied down a poem titled *Casey at the Bat*. Gunter didn't say where he had found it but asked Wolfie to recite it between the acts the next evening, as the Chicago and New York baseball clubs would be attending the performance.

That day Wolfie was very much upset. His son Jack was ill of diphtheria and not expected to live. He was in no mood for extras and tossed the paper aside.

But the next day he got a wire saying the boy was out of

danger and going to pull through. He was so relieved that he sat down and learned *Casey* in an hour. He used to remark, "If *Casey* is anything, it is a mile long!" But he was always a very quick study.

"At the evening performance," he would remember, "the clubs were in the boxes; old Cap Anson, Buck Ewing, and all the rest. I pulled *Casey* on them between the acts, and what a hit!"

From that moment he began to be interested in *Casey*, and off and on for years he tried to find out whose initials, E.L.T., were signed to the poem.

One night several years later, playing, as he liked to say, "with unforgettable chic" in *Wang* in Worcester, Massachusetts, he received a note in his dressing room: Would Mr. Hopper care to come around to a certain club in town after the performance and meet the author of *Casey at the Bat? Would he!*

The author turned out to be a Worcester manufacturer, Ernest L. Thayer. He hadn't made himself known because he disliked publicity—an unheard-of thing today. Until the day in 1940 when he died in Santa Barbara, Mr. Thayer never did accept any royalties for performance of his famous lines. *Casey* was produced twice as a movie: in 1915, with De Wolf Hopper, and later with Wallace Beery. Both pictures were stinkers.

No one could ever say I married Wolfie for money. He didn't have any. When we were married he was supporting four women—two ex-wives and two aunts—and I knew it. He was a man's man, yet he was hagridden all his life and could never afford to stop working.

His first wife, Ella, was his second cousin with whom he had had the mutual-protection pact. It was a foregone conclusion the union would end in divorce. It did.

His second wife, Ida, an attractive New England girl, was a member of his company. One day at rehearsal Wolfie asked the girls what they would do if he raised their wages. "Drop dead!" sang out Ida. He liked her spunk, fell in love with her, and they were married. They had one son, Jack, one of the finest men I ever knew and by far the most sentimental. He started in a bank as a messenger boy at the age of sixteen and worked his way up to the first vice-presidency of the organization. One of the most beloved men in New York banking circles, he was always attracted by theater people and had many stage folk among his depositors at the Chemical Bank and Trust Company.

Jack was devoted to Fanny Brice, who banked with him for more than thirty-five years. When he became seriously ill, I thought Fanny would want to know, so I phoned to tell her the doctors had given Jack not more than three months to live. Her reaction was, "Oh dear, who will I get to look after my business?"

Fanny died suddenly, and Jack survived her by six months.

Wolfie's third wife was a cute bundle, Edna Wallace. For many years they co-starred on the stage. I'm always amused when people mix me up with Edna Wallace Hopper. Sure we share the same last name, but the wrong number. She was three; I was number five, as in Chanel. Edna never got any alimony; she didn't need it. I wish I had her knack for finance. In the crash of '29, instead of losing her shirt as I did, she bought gaudier ones. Edna played Wall Street for a sucker and came out Mrs. Croesus. She invested her money in New York apartments, and during World War II she rented them to old stage friends. If their sons happened to be in the service, there was no increase in rent.

She loved children but never had any. Nowadays you'll find her baby-sitting at the drop of a hint with the grandchildren of her old friends from the theater. She tells the young parents, "I've been everywhere, seen everything. You go out and have yourselves a time."

Number four was Nella Bergen, a prima donna whom Wolfi married while they were appearing together in London during the Boer War.

Well, Ella, Ida, Edna, Nella, and Elda were all pitched in the same key.

I soon noticed that at breakfast I was being called Ida—"Ida, pass the buscuits, please." At lunch—"Edna, some more coffee." And at dinner, either Ella or Nella, but never Elda.

I didn't have much personality of my own then, but I'd be darned if I was going to give up the shred I did possess. So when Neysa McMein caught on to what was happening, she suggested that I go to the numerologist who had changed her name. I went flying!

Cryptically she made with the dates and numbers and it came out Hedda. "Hmmm-mmm," I said, "Hedda Hopper does have a nice round sound. I'll buy it!" And I went home and told Wolfie.

He regarded me bleakly and grunted, "Hedda cheese, hedda lettuce, hedda—nothing. I don't like it!"

But in less than a week I was Hedda. I never heard him call me Ella, Ida, Edna, or Nella again.

At last I had an identity of my own, and was on my way.

2

I learned to work hard while I was growing up in Altoona, and I acquired a standard of behavior from my mother and her twin brother, Uncle John. I didn't like my father much, reasoning that if he hadn't burdened my mother with such a raft of children (she had nine) and so much work she'd have had time to give me the affection I craved. When the neighbors' children went to bed, their mothers tucked them in, told them fairy stories, taught them songs, and kissed them good night. My mother never had time to tuck me in. I blamed it on my father's selfishness.

Mother had dark wavy hair and eyes like woodland pools. No matter how hot and tired she got working around the house, her hair always looked as though it had been marcelled within the last half hour. She didn't have to mention it if you'd done anything wrong; just a look from those eyes was enough.

I was three when I became aware of my grandfather, a stingy man. Grandmother bore him twelve children. He could afford them, being the owner of twenty-two farms. He rode around from farm to farm on a beautiful gray mare, like some overseer of the South, afraid he wouldn't get all the work the human body could give. He liked my mother's cooking and was always coming around to get more of it. But he took a hard attitude toward the young. The first time I remember noticing him was when he looked around at us all and said scornfully, "You children aren't worth your salt!" What did he want of a three-year-old? Blood? Well, he got it.

I think the only time in my life I've been afraid, he was the cause. Hiding from him one day, I squeezed myself into a ten-gallon crock. It broke and I cut my wrist. Anyway, it created a dramatic diversion; my grandfather was forgotten while Mother stanched my blood.

Of his twelve children, six were allowed to go to college and the other six worked his farms. Later on I thought the reason he was a bitter man was because he had a guilty conscience. My father was one of those who worked the farms. He ran away three times but always came back. Maybe I learned a lesson from it. I ran away from home and never came back.

When I was thirteen my grandfather was very sick, and the illness threatened his eyesight. Grandmother was too old to have the care of a sick man, and besides, the doctor was in Altoona. So, like a bear with a sore paw, Grandfather moved in on us. It would be cheaper to have Mother and me nurse him than pay a hospital bill.

So, on top of everything else we had to do, we took care of him. An operation was out of the question. He had high blood pressure and was too old.

It was the first time I ever saw leeches—the animal kind. Every few days the doctor leeched him, a horrible sight. Every other hour, too, for an hour, hot compresses had to be put on his eyes at five-minute intervals. I was elected because my hands were the only ones that were tough enough to take boiling water. As he couldn't control his functions, the bedclothes had to be changed five or six times a day. In those days there was no washing machine for the Furrys, so laundry was something more to be done by hand.

In eight weeks his health was better and he had his eyesight back, so he went home to New Enterprise, in Bedford County.

When school let out for the summer I went to stay at the farm. One day my grandfather said, "Elda, I want to speak to you; come into the parlor."

I can still see the place: a big, square room, with flower decorations under glass, tidies on the tables and chairs, and him sitting at a beautiful hand-carved secretary in one corner.

"I want to show you I appreciate your help in getting back my eyesight," he said. Pulling out a drawer in the secretary, he took something in his fingers, closed the drawer carefully, and said, "Here—I want to give you this. Put out your hand."

What do you think he gave me? One silver dollar.

If I hadn't recently saved his sight, I might have destroyed it by throwing the dollar in his face! I hadn't expected any reward, but when anybody volunteered for the first time in my life to give me something, I expected it to be important. Maybe a ten-dollar gold piece.

So, when he put the value of one silver dollar on his eyesight and my services, I put my grandfather out of my life. Slamming the money down on the secretary, I fled from the room, packed my clothes, went home, and never saw him again. Call it hate, call it vindictiveness, call it anything you like, as far as I was concerned he no longer existed. I should like to report that when he died I forgave him and at-

tended his funeral, but I did not. Having had no respect for him in life, I didn't develop any when he died.

The incident colored most of my life.

My brother Sherman helped Dad in the meat market. Between them they managed always to keep a fine fast horse. We had two horses: a good one for the boys to hitch to a buggy to take their girls riding—that was the way it was in our family; the boys got everything, the girls nothing—and Fanny, the good old plug used for store deliveries.

I never had a bicycle, and resented it. I never had any horse but old Fanny. All the other neighborhood kids had something that made you notice them, so I saved up—even tapped the till for a few extra dollars which I thought I'd earned (now I know I earned them)—until I had enough money to send to Sears Roebuck for a sidesaddle. No girl in town had one. I'd never used one, having ridden only farm horses, bareback. But I'd seen pictures in magazines of graceful ladies in tailored habits riding sidesaddle. So I made a habit for myself while I was waiting for my purchase to come by express. Its arrival marked a red-letter day in my life. I'd give a good deal if I had a picture of myself sallying forth on top of old Fanny, wearing my homemade habit and Sherman's derby hat.

It was Sunday, and I rode past the Altoona bucks and loafers without deigning a glance in their direction. My head was so high that the sky and I were cheek-to-cheek.

Halfway to Hollidaysburg, on the main highway, Fanny had enough. After working hard all week she was used to having the Sabbath to herself. She should carry this high-falutin miss around on her day of rest. Pretending to be frightened at a falling leaf, she bounced me off and ran away. Fifty yards ahead she slowed down, turned and laughed in my face, then waited while I picked myself up, dusted off my duds, and caught up with her, limping a bit.

I loved that horse. We understood each other, which is more than I can say for most of the humans in the family, except Mother and Uncle John.

One day my father announced that Fanny was too old and he was going to sell her to the glue factory. I screamed the house down. Fanny, having worked patiently all her life, deserved a quiet pasture in her old age and a nice burying when the time came. As usual, I lost out. To this day I can't look a pot of glue in the face.

Contrary to the customary complaint of children, Sundays were always exciting for me. I devoured every scrap of scan-

dal and fashion news in the Sunday supplement, after going to church and devoting much time to speculating about our minister.

For a preacher he had an awfully wild family, which he deserted after his sermon in order to make a ridiculous fuss over Mother, angling to be invited to dinner for our big rib roast. He was no fool. He knew our table had the best meat in town.

I was critical of the clothes worn by his daughter. She'd be gone for long, unexplained intervals, then reappear wearing new outfits more dashing and expensive-looking than the last batch. Everybody knew the salary her father got and wondered how she managed so well. I envied her those clothes.

Then a wonderful thing happened. We got a visiting minister who was young, gay, and unmarried. After three weeks of listening to his sermons, I was converted, thinking he'd stay around and baptize me. Without any warning he went away, leaving the baptism to our regular minister. For a wild moment I thought about snatching my soul back from the Lord's keeping; but it was too late. I'd given it!

My sister Dora was the oldest of us children; one followed who died soon after birth; then came my brother Sherman, one of the handsomest men I ever saw and my father's favorite; Cammon—poor thing, he didn't get much attention from any of us; Elda—that's me; Edgar; then another who lived but a short while; Frank and Margaret.

Dora, being the oldest, was our self-appointed boss. We all had to work, and Dora saw to it that we worked as hard as she. She had a queer streak, not hardness but a kind of perverseness, and seemed to enjoy causing pain. As she passed by she'd take the rim of an ear in her fingers and pinch. My brother Cammon carried a souvenir of that little habit to his grave. She tried hard to pinch me, but I was a fast mover and got out of her way. However, she found other ways to vent her spleen on me.

I was the family dishwasher. I've never met anyone who liked that job. To this day, except for my Royal Doulton, I'd rather break the dishes than wash them. Mother, taking pity on me, would sneak out to help me when Dora wasn't looking. But that Dora had eyes in the back of her head. She'd wait until Mother got at it, then sail out and announce, "Mother, you know perfectly well this is Elda's part of the housework; she's not to have help from anyone—not even you."

Another sweet sisterly practice of hers was to wear my new clothes before I had a chance to show them off. I was born with the knack for trimming a hat, turning out a blouse, making a tailored suit, the way I made my riding habit. Dora must have thought my clothes always looked better than hers —it may seem boastful, but they did—and found ways of being the first to wear them. Then when I'd appear our friends would say smugly, "Well, Elda, I see you're wearing Dora's dress again." A thing like that can become very irksome.

Came my twelfth or thirteenth Christmas. I had no idea what I'd receive for a present; most likely something to wear. The only thing I could be sure of was an orange in the toe of my stocking. Seven kids didn't leave much money for toys. I thought I'd have an understanding with Dora. At least, I understood it. "Whatever I get," I warned her, "I'm going to use first." Dora just tossed her head, giving out one of those laughs of hers.

I received a pair of skates. And while I was washing up the dishes, darned if she didn't swipe them and go skating! My Christmas spirit went up in a blaze of fury. I seethed, and when she came in from her winter sports, that Medusa's grin on her face, I flew at her and scratched her so she couldn't put her face out the door for two weeks. She told people the cat scratched her. She was so right! But that broke her of the habit of using my things first.

Dora had sense enough not to display her bossy airs around her beaux. She managed to get quite attractive ones. One in particular I would have liked to take away from her. He was a doctor, a hero of the Spanish-American War, who lived somewhere in the Middle West. If he were to take me for a bride, I could escape from Altoona. I'd have married a gorilla to do that. Not Dora. For all her show of independence, she liked staying close to Mother. Dora, tall, dark, with Mother's dark eyes, was insecure but not unattractive. Though she didn't have much style or any flair for touches, she was versatile and a hard worker. As for her beau the doctor, he didn't interest her half as much as he did me. I was attracted to him too much for my own good, and when I hit on a scheme to get his attention it backfired.

Three nights a week he came courting Dora. On those nights I was sent to bed early. One night I put on my prettiest nightgown—it wasn't much, but I sewed a few baby-blue ribbon bows on it here and there to perk it up—and went downstairs to appear before him, pretending I was walking in my sleep. I opened the door of the parlor and walked

right in, stiff-legged, with glassy, unseeing eyes—seeing everything, naturally.

My sister Dora screamed in maidenly horror—I never did catch her on his lap, alas—and in a confusion of vagueness I wheeled and stalked upstairs. In my room I bounced back into bed.

If my father needed any proof that this was no sleepwalker, which he did not, he had it when he heard me bounce into bed. In the morning, though I swore I didn't know what in the world he was talking about, Dad dealt out a couple of good whacks. I put on a big show of injured innocence. He couldn't *prove* I wasn't walking in my sleep. A girl ought not to be punished unless there was an admitted sin. I had to raise a son of my own before disproving that line of reasoning.

Despite my licking, I was still not cured of the craze to capture the doctor's attention. One day I found a gun. If I nicked myself, the doctor would have a patient whom he'd have to attend. Locking myself in my parents' bedroom, I pulled the trigger.

The darned thing wasn't loaded! I screeched bloody murder anyhow. Only then I wouldn't unlock the door. My folks put a ladder up to the window and came in to see what it was this time. My father quickly gave me another good whacking. I'd have tried the gun again except for the stricken look on my poor mother's face.

Terrified by the hovering threat of such a wild girl, the doctor fled town, went back to the Middle West, and was never seen or heard from again by any member of the Furry family.

Dora and I shared a bed. I was forever reading all the cheap novels I could find. Then I'd have a nightmare—always the same dream: either I was falling off a bridge into deep water or sliding off a rooftop into a fire. Coming out of my nightmare, I would leap in the air, landing with deadly accuracy on Dora's stomach. The happiest day of her life was her wedding day, not so much for the appropriate reason as that it enabled her to leave our bed. She never did tell me whether her husband had nightmares.

Not all my childhood memories are dismal. There was Uncle John, whom I worshiped. He was nearer saint than man, yet human enough to be an inspired tease.

Like many men of that period, he made his living by farming, in order that he might be a preacher on the Sabbath. He

preached a simple faith in God and old-fashioned horse sense.

Uncle John liked to carry me in from the fields on his shoulder and make a game of lowering me to within a hairsbreadth of a thistle patch for the fun of hearing me yell. He taught me to ride bareback and to pick cherries and apples without falling out of the trees and breaking my bones. He would set the kids down on the stone floor around a big dishpan of black cherries and chuckle when we dripped with juice from mouth to toes. How we ever got the stains out of our clothes I can't remember.

Uncle John and my mother set me an example of kindness, never speaking ill of anyone. They were absolutely unalike in appearance—he was blond and blue-eyed, she dark-eyed and brunette—but they were exactly alike in temperament and spirit.

I like to think that the twins—Mother and Uncle John, two truly good and great people—sit together up there in heaven, maybe eating apples, while they look after me.

Unless you happen to have been born into a big family equipped with healthy appetites, you have no idea of the labor that goes into cooking three squares a day, washing dishes, baking, cleaning house, doing the family wash, and ironing. I was strong as a horse and was at it from dawn to late at night. I liked working alongside my mother. She was a fine housekeeper; it made you proud just to see how fussy she was.

Our buckwheat flour was wonderful, specially ground. If a neighbor happened to drop in on the way to town, Mother would say, "Sit down for a minute. I'll have a mess of buckwheat cakes for you in no time at all."

We had six different ways of making lemon pie, so in our family lemon pie never got monotonous. We baked bread several times a week. I'd set it before going to bed, then get up with the chickens to knead the dough and make the loaves before the kitchen warmed up, so it would be ready to go into the oven when breakfast and the dishes were out of the way. I was baking cakes when I was still in pigtails. My specialty was devil's-food cake. Instead of using layer tins I baked the cake in one big sheet, then I cut it, put frosting between three layers and frosting an inch thick on top—*caramel* frosting, at that!

My brother Sherman got sick of working in the market—he was only paid a few dollars now and then, when Dad hap-

pened to think of it—and went to work for a man who would pay him a regular salary. So Dad told me to help him in the market.

I've been asked at times if Hollywood hams don't scare me. Once you've looked a four-legged hog in the face and dissected a side of pork, no two-legged ham is going to seem important enough to frighten you.

What is perhaps more important is that the butcher doesn't live who can cheat me. When I order a porterhouse steak I can tell to a sixteenth of an inch how much anatomy that butcher knows.

When I was called the best-dressed woman on the screen I had to laugh, remembering the days when I wore a pair of overalls, an old sweater, and an apron, and went into the cooler to cut off a quarter of beef and carry it out over my shoulder to the chopping block. The job had one drawback; it developed my muscles along with my strength, which didn't make me any too dainty a figure for the boys to take dancing —if I had had the beaux and the clothes for dancing, which I didn't. I liked to dance, though, so sometimes I'd twirl in my own room late at night.

I had only one beau in Altoona: a dentist. For a while I dreamed about what marriage to him would be like. But I stopped dreaming one Saturday when we went picnicking and I saw him in a bathing suit. He was covered all over with fur and reminded me of an emaciated orangoutan. We stayed in the sun all day, and by the time he put his clothes on again his face was as red as a brakeman's lantern. I knew then that we had no future together, even though he hadn't popped the question. However, I did let him stay around long enough to take me to see Ethel Barrymore in *Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines.*

From the instant I laid my peepers on Miss Barrymore I stopped listening to anything he said.

"Don't you want an ice-cream soda?" he said sadly.

"Sh-shhh——"

After a while he tried again, but I jabbed him in the ribs. After it was over we rode home in the trolley together, but we were on different planets. Finally he said, "Hey, what's wrong with you?"

"Don't say a word," I whispered. "This is the greatest moment in my life. I've decided something—just now——"

He brightened. "You have?"

"I'm going to become an actress."

If he'd laughed I'd have slugged him. But he just gaped at

me as though I'd gone crazy. Maybe I had. At least I'd seen a vision.

I remember to this day what Ethel wore. In one scene she had on an ermine tippet and carried a black velvet muff trimmed with ermine. Once I recalled it to her. By this time both of us were in Hollywood, both in pictures. She laughed. "I don't hold with these people, do you," she said, "who just won't admit that life can be stranger than fiction?" To this day I am thrilled by the memory of that first time I ever saw her perform, in *Captain Jinks.*

You may wonder why I had no beaux of my own except the aforementioned unappetizing specimen. Usually a girl's brothers bring their friends home, but my brothers didn't give a darn about me. I can understand why, because I bullied the big ones into housework, made the smaller ones slaves to my whims—not endearing habits. It had the effect of making my brothers act most of the time as though they didn't know me.

My father took a good deal of understanding. After he succeeded in getting us all born he wearied of his responsibility and yearned for the wide, open spaces. I'll be darned if he didn't just close up shop, pack a few belongings, and announce that he was off to the Klondike to find his fortune. What about all the bills outstanding at the market? What would we live on? When you don't have an answer you just shrug. My father was one of the most accomplished shruggers I ever knew.

The bills were allowed to pile up because he was afraid to ask people to pay—they might take their trade elsewhere. It made him mad not to be paid and, not having the nerve to ask for his money, he took it out in throwing his weight around the house.

However, off to the Klondike he went, and that was that.

"I'll get a job in the silk mill," I said to my mother. I was fourteen then, and the prospect of a job in a real mill was exciting to me.

"We'll starve before any daughter of mine goes to work in the mill," said Mother.

My brother Sherman went around trying to collect the bills, but no one took him seriously.

"Can I collect 'em?" I asked Mother.

"Child, you wouldn't know how to go about it," she said, smiling tenderly at me.

"They owe us money, don't they?" I said fiercely. "They know Dad's in the Klondike, don't they? They know what a

fine woman you are, don't they? They know I'm your daugl ter, don't they? And you don't think I'd know how to g about it? Well, I can talk—which seems to be more tha Sherman can!"

She knew I would never simmer down, so, reluctantly, sh turned the bills over to me.

I asked myself what an actress did on the stage when sh wanted something. She cooed like a dove; she raged like lion. She smiled or burst into tears. I wanted to be an actres Here was my chance to get some training.

I came in fighting. I was the fightingest fourteen-year-ol bill collector ever seen in Altoona. I persuaded, I threatene I was demure, I was a holy terror—and I collected enoug for us to live on till Dad came home.

I'd like to say he arrived with his pockets lined with gol What we received were tales of wild adventure and, tied u in the corner of his pocket handkerchief, a small nugget fc each. I soon traded mine for a set of jacks.

Once having seen Ethel Barrymore, the idea of becoming a actress gave me no rest. When the household was asleep acted out scenes from lurid novels, alone in my room. Be sides wanting to act, I wanted to sing. I felt I had the soul c a prima donna, and I sang loudest of anybody at church. M voice had two notes: high C and low C, with a sheer abys in between. I did mighty well with "Onward, Christian Sol diers." That's why to this day it's my favorite hymn. I as sociate it, too, with a hat.

It was my first store-bought hat. I paid five dollars for out of my own money. It was a thing of beauty. Of brigh green straw trimmed with red velvet geraniums, it made m feel rich as a queen. That hat was a greater attraction o Easter morning than the choir or the preacher's sermor There wasn't a man jack in that congregation who didn't loo at me, and I felt that the ladies' glances carried with then a spate of envy. I said if a hat can get the attention of thi many people, I'll never go bareheaded.

Since I missed high school, and Dad's wanderlust was ap peased for the moment, I made up my mind to have som real instruction in music. We didn't own a piano, but neighbor let me practice on hers. Her parlor was bitter col in winter. In our town the parlor was the stage for thre activities—sparking, weddings, and funerals—and no heat wa wasted on it in between. But though the cold threw the pian out of tune and my fingers were blue sticks of ice, I slave until I learned to read music. I didn't work up a bowin

acquaintance with Debussy, but got way beyond "Chopsticks."

I badgered my father to let me go to the Carter Conservatory of Music in Pittsburgh. He gave in when I was so aggressive and unpleasant that all he could think of was, "We'll have peace around here when she's gone." So he loosened up on the purse strings and I was off.

The Carters had a daughter, Hattie. We struck up a bosom friendship. She was going on the stage too. "Since you intend to be an actress, why don't you run away and come with me?" she said. The idea appealed to me but, though I had guts, I had to work up to it step by step.

Pretty soon I was learning more in Pittsburgh about the theater than about music. I spent every quarter I could lay my hands on for a seat in the gallery. I saw some wonderful plays.

In my spare time I walked past the beautiful homes of the steel magnates, gaped through the front windows of the Duquesne Club, and dreamed about what they were like inside. More than a quarter of a century later I found out.

Before I left home I was allowed to go to New York only once, to visit my Uncle Sam—not the one that collects taxes—who lived near Central Park. He was a missionary and ran the Sunshine Mission down on the Bowery, where the dregs of society slunk away into dark corners to hide their misery. A very different place from the beautiful Bowery in 1858 when De Wolf Hopper was born there. Uncle Sam used to visit us in Altoona occasionally and told wonderful stories about his work. But someone was always saying, "Elda, time for you to go to bed!" just when he was getting to the most exciting part about rescuing the bums from a life of sin and degradation.

I loved to visit him. In the daytime I'd sit in Central Park, feed the pigeons, and watch the people carrying on their flirtations. "Oh, if it would only happen to me!" I thought. And I assured myself it would someday. After I helped my aunt get supper and do the dishes, I would go down with Uncle Sam to his mission. He'd let me sit by him on the platform and I'd join in the singing. "The Old Rugged Cross" and "We'll Be Standing at the River" were rousers. Then I'd help pass out the coffee to the derelicts. Sometimes they'd grin vaguely at me, mumbling, "Hadda little girl like you once," and wanting to help Uncle Sam get in a few licks for a better life, I'd say, "I bet she misses you—you better sober up and go home to her."

Uncle Sam was able to take me on a wildly exciting tour of Chinatown. He could get in anywhere. We visited a Chinese

woman who said she was an actress. She was smoking opium. Uncle Sam didn't lecture her; just talked to her like any friend. He told me that before you could help people you had to gain their confidence. I must remember to try that sometime.

I loved Uncle Sam and had a fine time sitting in the park or helping him hand round coffee at the mission. "You must come and visit us again," he said when it was time for me to go home to Altoona. He said it the way people do, not thinking that you'll really come. He reckoned without his niece Elda.

In this life you can take poverty, you can take failure, you can take the big things; it's the little griefs that destroy you inside.

In our house there was a bamboo love seat which I adored. It was one of those curlicue double things; sitting in it, you face the person who is sitting in it with you. I have no idea where it came from. I just dreamed of the dark and handsome man who would someday sit in it with me.

I protected that love seat, whipping the other kids away from it to save it for the day. When its legs got wobbly, I cemented them; I kept the seat brushed, the frame dusted, watching over it jealously.

One day when I had just finished inspecting the love seat my father happened to stop in the parlor. My brother Frank came in and said, "Dad, will you give me five dollars?"

"What d'you want that much money for?" asked my father glumly. He wasn't at all interested when it came to handing out money.

"I just need it," said Frank.

"You can't—I just gave you five a week ago. What d'you want to do with it?"

This was too much for Frank, who had a foul temper. Grabbing for the thing nearest at hand, he picked up my love seat, raised it over his head, and banged it down on the floor. It smashed to pieces, bits of bamboo flying in every direction. There it lay, like some drunken derelict, beyond any hope of redemption.

That did it!

That marked the end of everything as far as living at home was concerned. Now my love seat was broken, part of my heart was broken with it, and there was nothing to keep me there any longer. I went up to my room and counted the money I had saved. I never got paid for my work in the butcher shop, and none of us got an allowance; when I thought I'd earned a certain amount I just took it out of the

ill. So by this time I had two hundred and fifty dollars of ny own money.

That night I found a valise and packed my clothes. Be- ore the family was up in the morning I was down at the tation waiting for the train to New York. I would go to Jncle Sam's house till I got my bearings.

Uncle Sam's work at the mission steeled him for anything —even me. Anyway, he didn't seem exactly surprised to ee me. He let Dad and Mother know where I was, so they vouldn't worry. It was two months before I wrote to them. Dad was disgusted. He took the attitude, "She's made her ed, let her lie in it. She'll get sick of it; let her alone and he'll come traipsing back home."

That was where I fooled him.

Luckily for me, I had kept in touch with Hattie Carter and new where she lived. When I turned up at her boarding- ouse I was certainly the last person she expected to see; he never thought I'd leave home.

She had a chorus job with the Aborn Opera Company. Maybe I can get you in too," she said.

I tagged along when she went to rehearsal and, sure nough, the stage manager gave me a job at twenty-five dol- ars a week. Things were different in those days. There veren't a hundred stage-struck girls for every job. And I vas young and pretty. My figure wasn't bad. I had a peaches- nd-cream complexion. I was working under one handicap, owever. No talent.

We opened in Baltimore. The first time I appeared in ostume in front of the stage manager—pink tights and shoes size too small—he gave me a look and said out of the orner of his mouth to another man, "I'd like to own *that* or a night!"

I thought what a nice compliment and said politely, Thank you very much." When we came off the stage Iattie, who'd overheard the remark, walked up to him and lapped his face.

"What an awful thing to do!" I hissed at her. "He's weet."

"There are some things you ought to know," said Hattie nd proceeded to take me aside and explain the facts of life. Forget the words *thank you*," she said sternly, "and learn o say *No*, loud and clear."

There must have been an unusual scarcity of chorus girls iat year who would brave the road for twenty-five dollars week, because they kept me on the full season. After paying

for a room and food and laundry there wasn't anything left But if you had a roommate—and I had Hattie—and could forget about thick, juicy porterhouse steaks, and weren't afraid of bedbugs, you could get along. I did.

The next season I got a chorus job with the Shuberts. Our chorus master, Ned Wayburn, was as tough an hombre as they come.

We'd been rehearsing three days when he yelled, "Stop!" He pointed a finger in my direction and snapped, "You! Step out!"

He couldn't mean me! Bellowing like that? I stole a glance to right and left of me, and over my shoulder.

"You!" he roared again.

Meekly I said, "You don't mean me?"

"Yes, you!"

I stepped out, and this is what he said, in front of the entire company: "Without doubt you are the most awkward cow it's ever been my misfortune to come across. How did you get in this theater in the first place? Who grabbed you off the farm? What you're doing here I'll never know. But if you've got nerve enough to take it, I'll give it. Now get back there in line and learn those steps!"

By that time I was so shaken I didn't know my left foot from my right. I decided that if I was going to be on the stage I'd have to take dancing lessons at night and learn fast.

Well, you can't be hung for trying. I went to see Mr. Romeo, ballet dancer in the Metropolitan Opera, and told him what had happened. "Please teach me a few steps, Mr. Romeo, so I can keep my job. I've just got to," I pleaded. It was either keep my job or accept a fate worse than death—go home to Altoona.

I didn't know until much later that Mr. Romeo and Mr. Wayburn were bitter rivals. For that reason and no other Mr. Romeo decided to teach me the fundamentals of the dance.

I couldn't even point a toe, so first he stretched my instep. I can still hear my cartilages creak and snap. But, by golly, I finally was able to point my toes, and it wasn't long before I was standing on them. But I was never cut out for the ballet. Those meat-market muscles were not the kind you dance with.

I got by with Mr. Wayburn. He gave me never a smile or a decent word, and I don't know what he thought. But it didn't matter. I held my job.

A year after Ned Wayburn died—I was then writing a column—I had a letter from his widow.

> You knew, and I'm sure loved, my husband, as everyone did who knew him. You know the great story of his life. I believe it would make a wonderful movie. Because of his kindness to you, would you please help me sell it to a picture company?

When I first thought about getting Edgar Selwyn to give me a part in *The Country Boy* I talked it over with my friend Louise Dresser. The previous summer I had been lucky enough to get four weeks of work in stock in Mount Vernon, New York, and I lived with Louise. She had been De Wolf Hopper's leading lady. While I was playing in stock she lent me some of her clothes.

After the fourth week I asked Louise's mother, who had seen all four plays, which part I'd played best.

"That Indian woman in *Girl of the Golden West*," she said.

"But I only got to say 'Ugh!' in that."

"That's why I liked it best," she said.

With that doubtful encouragement, I advanced on Mr. Selwyn and he gave me the leading part. To this day I can't help admiring his reckless courage.

Helen Hayes thought he had courage, too, when he asked her to come to Hollywood and make *The Sin of Madelon Claudet*. The mechanics of picture-making made her so nervous she wanted to scream. Not being able to touch her face when it was made up annoyed her. At noon, instead of eating, she'd get a second makeup; grease paint in place of vitamins.

The film was finished and previewed. Helen saw it and congealed inside. She begged the studio to sell it to her so she could destroy it. Metro wouldn't sell. Helen wouldn't speak to Edgar Selwyn.

The picture got her an Academy Award.

She didn't see Selwyn for years. One night as he sat in a New York theater waiting for the curtain to rise on a new play, Helen came down the aisle.

Spotting Edgar as she passed, she leaned over, patted him on the shoulder, and whispered, "Thanks, genius."

We toured the country with *The Country Boy*, winding up at Christmas time in Minneapolis, Minnesota, with the temperature at 42 below. Audiences are always slim around the holidays, and ours were even slimmer due to the weather.

Those who did come to see us seemed to sense that we needed encouragement and were awfully good to us.

Half a dozen of them had a party at the hotel after the Christmas night performance and asked us to come. We did, and it was quite gay; there was something touching about souvenirs of paper parasols and paper hats, with the weather outside far below zero.

The transportation to the station the following morning was horse-and-sled. I'd enjoyed myself so much at the party that I still wore my paper hat and held the parasol over my head. For the few passers-by in the streets it pleasantly confirmed the legend that all stage people are crazy.

We got into a day coach that didn't have any heat. My getup teed off such a hilarious time that laughter and good spirits and general youth kept us warm until we reached our next stop.

Having decided, when I returned to New York, that acting wasn't enough for me and my next job must be as a prima donna, I studied hard at singing all summer long. I possessed one best dress, black satin, which the summer heat seemed to turn green, like Christmas jewelry.

The girls at the Three Arts Club got so tired of my changeable satin dress that they said if I didn't get something else they'd pour gasoline over me and set the dress afire. They were just the girls who could do it, too! So I loosened up and bought another outfit—which I needed anyway to hunt for another job!

The company of *The Quaker Girl* yielded a number of friendships that have lasted. Natalie Alt was the Quaker Girl. She had a lovely voice, and a sweet mother, who traveled with us. Later Natalie married a Chicago businessman and left the stage to raise a family. We're still friends.

In that company, too, I first met Theodosia de Coppet, later to become famous as Theda Bara. Theodosia played a Frenchwoman, with an accent that wouldn't fool a five-year-old. Oh, brother!

Theodosia then was a believer in spiritualism and read about it constantly. In a traveling theatrical troupe, when you have time on your hands, those things are contagious. Theo's spirits got me to the point where I began hearing tappings on the wall behind my bed. It might all have landed me in a booby hatch if I hadn't tumbled to the fact that I'm just too weak-minded to accept spirits. Also my arithmetic was so shaky I couldn't keep count of the knockings. So I gave the whole thing up.

Theo, however, went on her spiritualistic way. The following season she became the first vampire of the screen for William Fox. They both made a fortune from her films. *A Fool There Was* is still talked about in many quarters, and the corners of my mouth go up when I think about it.

When Theda made a return to the stage years later she chose as her vehicle *The Blue Flame,* which, when it reached Boston, lit up the Hub's whole sky. Police had to restrain the Harvard Hot Dogs from carrying Miss Bara from the stage door to her cream-colored Rolls-Royce—modest gift of her producer, Al Woods, as a slight token of respect for the money they were making.

Woods offered her a tour of the country, in a private railway car no less. They would have made a mint, but Theda knew the audiences and money would be waiting the next year. And the next. First she wanted to savor the adoration of Broadway.

New York had seen many flames, but never one like *The Blue Flame,* so the critics extinguished it quickly. The *Flame* didn't leave a scar on Theda. She is now one of Beverly Hills' most accomplished hostesses. She and her husband Charles Brabin live in a charming house, unpretentious but beautifully furnished. Few of the present-day motion-picture stars are their guests, who are more apt to be from the Social Register.

Well, *The Quaker Girl* closed in Albany, and I ran off secretly and married Wolfie. I couldn't help wondering what the neighbors in Altoona were saying. Probably, "Just think of that; why, Elda used to cut steaks for me in her father's butcher shop!"

3

When Wolfie was wooing me he let his imagination run riot in one of his letters about our honeymoon. It was going to be the greatest anyone ever had. Nothing was ever planned, even by royalty, like it. Every wish of my poor, fluttering heart was to be satisfied. Any place I chose, we would go.

I'd never had a letter like that, and I believed every word of it. After our marriage, the honeymoon wasn't mentioned until after the eight-week run of *Iolanthe,* and then I didn't have to do the talking.

Laurette Taylor and her author husband, Hartley Man-

ners, did it for me. Hartley, who wrote *Peg o' My Heart* especially for Laurette, was taking her to his native England for her first visit. They wanted Wolfie and me to go along and make it a touring quartet. Neither Laurette nor I had ever been on an ocean liner. I was ecstatic until Wolfie said, "No, we can't. We'd only have six weeks before I have to assemble a company and plan next season's tour. When I go over, I want to take the car and Harris (his chauffeur) and laze around for at least four months."

"But think of our honeymoon," I argued. "We could live off the memory of those six weeks for the rest of our lives." I'd completely forgotten that he'd already had four honeymoons.

The only glimpse of Europe I got that year was going to the steamer with Laurette and Hartley to see them off. I saw the ship that was to touch the European shore, and as the gong sounded for "All ashore that's going ashore," I stumbled down the gangplank, leaving a stream of tears behind me, and stood at the end of the pier waving good-by.

Europe being out, we picked up BB and took the Ideal Tour through the White Mountains by motor. Because people remembered that Wolfie had a taste for tiny women, they kept mistaking BB for the bride and me for the excess baggage. Fortunately my sense of humor was kept intact by my love for BB, and vice versa.

As we turned for home we had an automobile accident in Goshen, New York. The car couldn't be repaired in less than two days. The town of Goshen was only a hop, skip, and a jump from New York City. But with Wolfie, when you traveled by motor, by motor you returned. So we settled down to stay in Goshen until the car was ready.

Wolfie never owned a home, but he always had the latest-model automobile. If you said, "I want some red thread," he'd say, "I'll get it for you," because it might mean a ride of twenty miles.

To me an automobile was a convenience to get from place to place quickly. To Wolfie it was a mode of life. Next to women came his love for fast motorcars. In his lifetime he had at least fifteen more automobiles than he had wives.

The swank racing meet for harness horses was on in Goshen, but we didn't know it. When we came down to dinner at the Goshen Inn with our traveling clothes on—I was wearing a hat with orange coq feathers—everybody else was done to the teeth in fancy evening clothes and jewels. The only thing you could do was laugh it off. We did.

Wolfie was instantly recognized and we were invited to

join the biggest party. Young, middle-aged, or old always welcomed him. One of our hosts turned out to be Wall Street's "Tandem Jack" Townsend, so called because he drove his prize horses tandem. This noted race-horse breeder offered me a horse as a wedding present, and to this day I regret not accepting it.

We were rotten spoiled at Goshen. Wolfie had such a grand time with his "two girls," as he explained us to everyone, that he ate too much and got an overdose of uric acid. We reached New York in the sizzling heat, and he felt so awful that we put BB on the train for Buffalo, got back in the car, and headed for French Lick Springs, Indiana, the home of Pluto Water. Wolfie was going to get rid of his uric embarrassment with no more nonense even if he had to do it the hard way.

The cure seemed to him such a fine experience that, never a man to keep a good thing to himself, he insisted on my taking it too. I was a great big, strong, husky girl and there was nothing the matter with me, except perhaps being lovesick; but Wolfie insisted that mud and Pluto Water would be perfect for me too.

Though the Pluto Water smelled and tasted like rotten eggs, I said, "Yes, dear," and plunged in. I not only met my first mud bath but went on a diet as well. We were paying seventeen dollars a day apiece for our board, but when I now recall that I never got a lip around any of that good food, I could die. I drank ten glasses of hot Pluto a day. If I had only realized then that it was possible for a bride to employ the word *No!* When I did catch on, I overdid it.

The room adjoining ours was occupied by stage star Arnold Daly. He had come to French Lick with a laudable ambition to get over a drunk, but found certain discomforts in trying to overlay alcohol with Pluto Water. It doesn't mix; it explodes.

I was glad—and weak—when Wolfie gave the signal that he'd had enough. French Lick Springs in the heat of the summer wasn't the sylvan dell it was cracked up to be. Every citizen with the price of escape did so. Not Wolfie. He promised me the world for my honeymoon, but what I got was Pluto Water.

As we motored back to New York the air was like a blast from hell. But impromptu receptions were held for Hopper in every city and town where we paused. Old friends serenaded him with snatches of *Iolanthe.* In those days practically every middle-aged person in America who could read and had a retentive memory made it a point of pride

to know excerpts from the Gilbert and Sullivan librettos. And I was so awed by the fact of being the bride of this spectacular specimen, I almost forgot the heat.

After endless receptions we reached New York, and Wolfie assembled his repertory company for his tour. I couldn't sing well enough to do Gilbert and Sullivan, but I traveled along with the company.

It wasn't always work. Important people entertained us; Wolfie gave any number of free performances for their favorite charities. Besides, they liked him. After the theater there was always supper and a game of hearts. Wolfie could never concentrate on bridge; it cut down on his storytelling!

Thus forty weeks sped by, on wings of happiness and song.

Among the players in that company were Alice Brady and John Charles Thomas. Alice was the prima donna. The theater was in her blood. Her mother had been a Spanish dancer, and Alice inherited a flair from both her mother and her father, producer William A. Brady, who later married Grace George.

John Charles Thomas, the son of a Baltimore Presbyterian minister, was experiencing his first important theatrical engagement. It was important to him for another reason too: he was a bridegroom, and Wolfie was paying him the princely sum of one hundred dollars a week.

He and Alice were unforgettable as the shepherd and shepherdess in *Iolanthe*. In their youngness, it was as though they had stepped forth from a painting in the Metropolitan Museum, and their voices had such freshness and vibrancy, all you could think about was wood violets and spring.

With her tremendous vitality, Alice was the despair of Wolfie. She would come flying into the theater fifteen minutes before curtain time. Some of the Gilbert and Sullivan roles are extremely tricky to sing. For instance, Mabel in *Pirates of Penzance*. Mabel makes her entrance at the top of a long, winding staircase. A brilliant trill is followed by a difficult cadenza as she descends to the stage. Many a night Alice would give us cold chills by irresponsibly forgetting the words and music, just standing on the stairway and giggling cheerfully. How well Wolfie knew that the Gilbert and Sullivan devotee is infuriated by any tampering with the beloved operas!

I hit on a remedy and suggested it to Wolfie, who said to go ahead and try it.

"Alice," I said solemnly, "if you do that again, I'm going

to hiss you, and believe me, my girl, the audience will pick it up and join in."

She stared at me with those great eyes. "Why, Hedda, what are you talking about—you wouldn't do such a thing to me!"

"Try me and see."

She did. I did. The audience did. Alice never fumbled the lyrics again. Of course she had never meant to throw the opera off; she was simply high-spirited, young, and thoughtless.

I once attended a vaudeville show with Alice. She was near-sighted but wouldn't wear glasses. Instead she carried a lorgnette.

On the bill was a monkey act. Alice sat on the edge of her seat, peering in rapture through the lorgnette. It hardly seemed possible to me, but she was more interested in those monkeys than in the juggler or the high-bicycle rider.

"Good lord, Alice!" I said. "What can you see in them? I think they're disgusting!"

"Be quiet!" she commanded me. "I might have to play one of them someday."

Alice had her own method for keeping trim. At lunch time, instead of eating, she would invite a playwright to come in and read her his new play, or she'd sample a song writer's new tune; or, if she happened to be decorating a new apartment, which she did every whipstitch, she'd have fabrics brought in, select colors for her room, decide on antiques, do any and every thing to keep herself occupied so the thought of food couldn't enter her mind.

When she was fast becoming a skeleton, she became worried. She lost her appetite completely, and her stomach shrank so that she had trouble retaining anything. An expert doctor told me, "Miss Brady, I treated starving children in Belgium during the war. But yours is the worst case of starvation I have ever seen. What are you doing to yourself?"

Her marriage to Jimmy Crane was to me a tragedy. I had known him since we toured in *The Country Boy*. Jimmy was a good actor and an amusing companion, but undependable.

When I heard that Jimmy and Alice had fallen in love I took myself to Alice's dressing room at the Playhouse after a Saturday matinee and poured out everything I knew about Jimmy.

Two days later they were married.

Within two weeks Jimmy and I were working together in a picture in support of Billie Burke. We were on location at

Colonel William Thompson's beautiful home on the Hudson River.

When Jimmy caught sight of me he cut me dead. He was ready to give up the part when he heard I was to be in the picture. After we'd worked several days I walked over to him and said, "I want to talk to you."

"Well, I won't listen." But rather than create an out-and-out scene, he followed me into the library.

"I know you're hurt because Alice told you what I said."

"Should I love you for it?" he asked.

"No, but put yourself in my place."

"What do you mean?"

"This. I've known you a long time. I didn't feel you'd make Alice happy."

"That's none of your business!" he shouted.

"I know. But remember, Alice is my friend. She's never loved anyone before. Perhaps I had no right to interfere, but I was thinking only of her happiness. You must have some fine qualities, otherwise Alice wouldn't love you."

After their divorce I ran into her one day. "I'm sorry," I said.

She looked at me with a straight, steady gaze from those beautiful eyes and said slowly, "Hedda, for almost a year I knew perfect happiness. That's more than most women ever get."

That was the first time I'd heard that line. Many times since I've heard it on stage and screen. But to me forever it comes straight from the heart of Alice Brady.

Alice had signed on with Wolfie's company for only one season, but John Charles Thomas had signed for two. His contract called for no raise in salary, but for the second year he asked for twenty-five dollars more weekly. To Wolfie a contract was binding—except the marriage contract, of course—and he was very stubborn in such matters. So he lost that glorious voice, taking on, in John's place, John Willard, who, though he later wrote *The Cat and the Canary* and loved singing more than anything else in the world, nevertheless couldn't produce a true note, let alone hang a lyric on it!

Although John Charles had a poor opinion of Wolfie's rules for paying his artists, he never failed to give him credit for his perfect enunciation. While John was a member of the company Wolfie would take him night after night into his dressing room, saying patiently, "Young man, these audiences pay their money to hear music *and* words. You're cheating

them; you mumble. You've got to let them hear the words, understand what those words mean."

Only a few years ago, when John and I were touring on the Pennsylvania Railroad with James H. Duff (then governor of Pennsylvania), Theodore Roosevelt III (grandson of the famous Teddy), and state officials, to help celebrate Pennsylvania Week, John would open the festivities at nine o'clock in the morning by singing on a flatcar, which we used for our stage. Every person who came down to the station could hear his music and words.

"Your voice is just as good as it was when you joined Wolfie's company," I said.

"Yes," replied John, "and I have him to thank for much of my success. If he hadn't helped me with my enunciation, I don't believe I'd be traveling on this train today."

As Wolfie's wife, I didn't hover around the fringes of a world of celebrated people; I was pitchforked right in amongst 'em. But don't think I was blasé about mingling with the famous. No such thing! I was overawed. At that time, and this may come as a shock, I was shy. I had high coloring and blushed outrageously. At a dinner party the man sitting next to me made some pleasant comment on my complexion. I turned as red as grandfather's underwear, burst into tears, and rushed out of the room! I wasn't used to compliments and thought people were only making fun of my country manners and Pennsylvania accent.

I still rolled my R's like the edge of a cultivator. "Motherrrrr, sisterrrrr, fatherrrrrr," I said, and spread Alleghaaaaany all over the place. Wolfie went to work on my enunciation, as he had with John Charles Thomas. He taught me to clip off words as neatly as a man snips off the end of a cigar. It was hard for me to learn, but he kept after me, shaming me into it. I got a postgraduate course before I'd fully digested the three R's.

In fact, I got an overdose. I clipped my letters so short that I sounded like an inbred British dowager mated to a Boston bull terrier. I became so affected, I nauseated myself and my friends. It was that very affectation of clipping my R's that got me into all those phony society-female roles that I played on the screen.

On the domestic scene, I was right handy. Wolfie liked me to fill his pipe, light it, and hand it to him. One night we were dining with Laurette Taylor, Hartley Manners, Ella Wheeler Wilcox and a dozen other famous people, including

the hero of the U.S.S. *Merrimac* incident, Lieutenant Richmond P. Hobson. After dinner, cigars were passed to the gentlemen, and a pipe and tobacco were brought to me on a silver tray.

Knowing what was expected of me, I filled it, lit it, and got it going. Poor Hobson watched me popeyed. Mrs. Wilcox said in distress, "My dear young lady, don't you realize this dreadful habit will stunt your growth?"

"Stunt her growth?" yelled Wolfie. "I wish something would!"

My first meeting with Maude Adams came when Wolfie took me to her dressing room in the Empire Theatre. No star today compares with her. Whenever I hear her name it conjures up for me James M. Barrie's wonderful bit from *What Every Woman Knows:*

> Charm is a sort of bloom on a woman. If you have it, you don't need to have anything else, and if you don't have it, it doesn't much matter what else you have.

Maude Adams and Hopper didn't meet often but had an extravagant admiration for each other. He never missed her plays when he was in town. When he paid a lady a compliment, he went all out. It became a symphony of sound; he was irresistible, and even the ethereal Maude Adams found him so.

After he'd finished a speech Shakespeare would have been proud of, Miss Adams murmured in that unequaled shy way, "You make me feel as though I'd just had a two-week vacation in the country by a running brook."

I never saw her again until David Selznick brought her to Hollywood for his picture *The Young in Heart*. She consented to a test, but after looking at herself on the screen realized that although she was young in heart, she was no longer young in body, and turned it down.

While in Los Angeles she made one appearance, at our Philharmonic Auditorium.

She didn't walk, she floated onto the stage in a cloud of gray chiffon. The audience, moved by something it couldn't define, rose to greet her. Like a benediction, she poured out her talent and emotion. Even though she was a little old lady, her voice was like a Schubert melody, her spirit Eternal Youth.

It was an evening to be remembered. She told about her first meeting with James Barrie. Trembling at the idea of

greeting this great man, she seated herself in the living room of his home to wait, having come to see him by appointment.

When he came into the room he was holding a huge dog by its collar. Looking at his diminutive visitor, crowded into a corner of her chair, he said offhand, "Would you care to see us wrestle?"

Slipping on a cap to protect his face, he and the dog wrestled around the room.

Miss Adams tossed her audience a timid smile, full of April light, and added, "If you sometime have a visitor who is shy, try putting him or her at ease by doing that."

Then she told how she learned to laugh, and there wasn't a straight face in that packed auditorium.

"I'd finished a year's engagement; in California it was," said she, "Oakland. I was about to take the train for New York. I was young. My producer called for me in a carriage.

"As we started off, he said, 'Now that the season has ended, let's have a lesson. I'll teach you how to laugh. On the stage you always sound self-conscious.'

"I thought," said Miss Adams, "that it was a strange time for him to start giving me lessons, but I wanted to learn. He began by saying, 'Listen to the clip-clop of old Dobbin's feet.' I did. And then he went on, 'I want you to say Ha!Ha!Ha! to that rhythm. Do it now, and in a minute I'll ask the driver to make Dobbin go faster.'

"By the time the horse was galloping," related Miss Adams, laughing gently, "my Ha!Ha!Ha!s were a crescendo of hysteria. And do you know, I've never been shy of laughing, either on or off the stage, since."

I've always thought it a pity we didn't invite her to make a picture before she was past middle age. Think what it would mean to the rising generation—and what an incomparable lesson in acting.

Because of Maude Adams's shyness, I was surprised when she started to teach dramatics to classes of young girls at Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri. But she explained it: "Youth is shy too. They were more afraid of me than I was of them. Being shy together, we lost it with each other."

There must have been a lot to this. Jean Arthur spent a year at Stephens and told me about speaking to the class on the technique of motion-picture acting. "When it was over," said Jean, who runs from her own shadow, "I sat down for ten minutes and trembled. While I was speaking, I had no fear at all."

Miss Adams went to Yucca Loma Ranch near Victorville while she was in the midst of her screen dilemma; there she

fell in love with the desert. She told me later, "I never felt so close to God before." She got up for every sunrise, and watched each sunset until the last vestige of color left the sky. She made a simple gesture of her small hand. "There you could see the hand of God at work."

Wolfie also introduced me to Lillian Russell, whose character matched her beautiful face. I never heard anyone, man or woman, say an unkind word about her.

Wolfie had prepared me for the meeting by telling me tales about their times together on the stage in the Weber and Fields Music Hall. That was a mecca for great talent. David Warfield played low comedy there before he did *The Music Master,* a play which gave him undying fame. Weber and Fields chorus girls were as famous as the Floradora Sextet or the Ziegfeld Girls.

Whenever a newcomer joined the company she was brought straightway to Lillian Russell's dressing room, introduced, and given what today's G.I. knows as an indoctrination course. She was asked if there was anything she needed in her new surroundings and told that if ever she was in trouble and needed help, she must come at once to Miss Russell, who was there to be helpful.

When word reached Lillian Russell that the new beauty had received a box of flowers containing a diamond bracelet or a one-hundred-dollar bill, or a little sheaf of crackling stock certificates—*and* an invitation to a nice quiet little supper—that young woman was summoned to Miss Russell's room again.

"Sit down, my girl," Miss Russell would say, "there are some things I would like to explain to you." Lillian Russell knew very well indeed what the score was; out of her great worldly wisdom she knew that few girls were equipped to live the moth-and-flame life which beckoned the beauties of the chorus so brightly. And in her kind voice she pictured what would come after the girl, sitting wide-eyed on the edge of the velvet chair in the corner of the star's dressing room, accepted the first insinuating invitation. Very likely an apartment of her own, in place of the second-rate bedroom she shared with another girl. Very likely a complete absence of bills for food and clothes. Certainly charge accounts at the luxury stores, almost certainly a carriage of her own, and a coachman. She'd be wined and dined—though not in public, naturally—with certain of her benefactor's friends and their loves. She'd grow used to all this, wonder how she had ever

done without it, never imagine that she would or could do without it again . . .

And one day there would be an abrupt end. Perhaps a note; perhaps, on the other hand, only a rude announcement from the building manager that the apartment had been rented to someone else and must be vacated in forty-eight hours.

"You see, my dear, it would be difficult for you. You'd be out of a job; your own friends would have drifted away. Now I want you to be a nice, sensible girl and return the bracelet. It can't possibly bring you any happiness. You're young—your life is before you. There now, dry your tears and run along—and let me know if there is anything I can do to help you."

Lillian's own life hadn't been dreary. Not with Diamond Jim Brady, and all the others; not with being the toast of two continents. And later on she was to retire from the stage and become the wife of Alexander Moore, wealthy publisher and Ambassador to Spain. But, looking into her mirror after the girl had gone, the star knew that she was an exceptional person, that there were not many endowed with her strength, that streak of utter incorruptibility. She thanked God for it and translated it into a sense of responsibility for others.

All this Wolfie had sketched in for me before I met her. We became friends; sometimes she was a guest in our home.

Wolfie roared with laughter when he described how his mother and Lillian's conducted a claque for their famous offspring.

It got off to a rather ragged start. Mrs. Russell was seated in the first theater box and Mrs. Hopper in the one behind. The two dear old ladies had never met. "When it came time to applaud," Wolfie would say, "Mother made a fierce racket, by a very simple device. She carried a gold-headed cane, and when it was time for applause she simply beat her cane on the floor. Mrs. Russell turned around and glared at my mother, but Mother kept right on pounding her cane.

"The next time they attended I saw to it that they were introduced. Lillian had given her mother a cane too. Their seats this time were in the same box. At the first opportunity they set up such a clatter with their canes that, of course, we had to do many encores. We were singing a duet in a treetop, mind you. At every chance throughout the performance our mothers led the applause for more encores. The audience finally caught on to the source of the enthusiasm but never did realize it was all in the family."

Everybody who was anybody either lived at the Algonquin Hotel or ate there. Men from Wall Street came to lunch to flirt with the beautiful actresses, and rich dowagers came to ogle the handsome actors. While they were at it they'd top off their meal with the fabulous pastry made by Sarah, Frank Case's pastry cook. She was a huge, black, religious woman with the most impressive and flashing white store teeth I've ever beheld. When she'd baked the pastries she would do up her head in a dazzling white turban and come into the dining room to serve them.

Another of her creations that was a favorite with Wolfie was Indian pudding. He was a great salesman, along with his other talents, and he spread the word far and wide about the Algonquin's matchless Indian pudding. "Made with corn meal, molasses, and custard," he would shout, "finest thing you ever put your tongue to! You ought to come in and try it!"

One night Frank came over to our table. "Well, Wolfie," he said, "you'll be glad to know we've got your favorite—Indian pudding—tonight." Wolfie was so delighted that he jumped up from his chair and loped around the dining room to sell others on the idea of having some. Raymond Hitchcock reared back in his chair and exclaimed, "Ugh! I wouldn't touch the stuff." Wolfie stared at him and remarked, "Why, you're uncivilized, that's all the matter with you. But it'll leave all the more for the rest of us." He pranced over to the John Drews, Donald Brian, and half a dozen others. Then, with a beatific smile, he came back and sat down at the table.

After he finished his steak he turned unctuously to the waiter, patting his tummy in anticipation and saying, "Well, now bring me my pudding."

In a few minutes the waiter came back from the kitchen. I thought he looked queer. He stood beside Wolfie, shifting uneasily from one foot to the other. "Mr. Hopper," he quaked, "I hardly know how to tell you this. But—you got so many people to eat Indian pudding that—well, sir, it's—that is, it's all gone!"

"Gone!" roared Wolfie, like a wounded buffalo. "Gone? How can it be gone? That was *my* pudding!"

Sarah knew everyone. She was as much a part of the place as Douglas Fairbanks—or young Doug, who was practically brought up in the Algonquin lobby during his tender years. Sarah was a great person, sympathetic to anyone in trouble. She had a sixth sense and divined things. If you had a problem you preferred to keep to yourself, you'd best avoid

Sarah, who would ferret it out and insist on helping to solve it for you.

The Algonquin bulged with resident actors. John Drew, their dean, and Leo Ditrichstein lent an air of prestige and solidity. Leo was a Jekyll and Hyde character—deadly dull in private life, a glittering lover on stage. Off stage, he was always in search of an audience. Another was Elsie Janis, who had a field day imitating everybody in the dining room. She was pursued by rich bachelors from all over America but wasn't romantically interested in any of them. Little Elsie's talent was her gold mine; she didn't need a rich bachelor.

There was a bouquet of in-and-outers who stayed at the hotel when they could afford it and were absent when they had to retrench. Jack Barrymore was one of the best. When he had money, or Frank Case felt delicate about reminding him of his bill, Jack would be there, a combination of cricket and cock o' the walk. When his finances were in too serious eclipse to be laughed off, he would disappear. We would miss his jaunty wildness; but one fine day he would come bouncing back, his pockets stuffed with gold, his spirit carefree and gay.

I've always suspected that one of the greatest attractions at the Algonquin was the long, mirror-lined dining room. What the exercise rail is to ballet dancers those mirrors were to the players. You could watch Jack Barrymore, Violet Kemble Cooper, Glenn Hunter, Margalo Gillmore, Glenn Anders, Jane Cowl, Fred Stone, Constance Collier, and any number of others give and regive their greatest performances. They could not only watch their own act but also, through the mirrors, see the reactions of their friends.

I watched a big, rawboned westerner come in for lunch one day. When a delicate-looking, elegant lady took a cigarette out of a carved tortoise-shell case, contentedly lit and smoked it, I thought he would go berserk, "I do declare," he exclaimed, "I never saw anything like that in m' lifel A lady smokin' in public! Who is she?"

"Mrs. John Drew," I whispered.

He reared back. "Ma'am, you must be mistaken. Mrs. Drew's a lady, and ladies don't do things like that."

But Mrs. Drew was—and she did.

In the mirrored dining room I saw Tallulah Bankhead give a rare performance. She had raised a forkful of scrambled eggs to her mouth when her passion, Jack Barrymore, strode in and sat across the room from her. They were back to back, but she saw him in the mirror. Her hand trembled, and the

eggs straggled off her fork, which clattered to the plate. She turned so pale you'd have thought she was a Victorian lady instead of a lusty southern belle. Maybe she did it to attract Jack's attention; maybe emotion really seized her. I like to think that it was the latter. Jack had announced his engagement the day before, but Tallulah, as well as half a dozen beautiful actresses of that day, was madly in love with him. She had dozens of framed photographs of him in her room. The day he led a new bride to the altar, she, in typical Bankhead fashion, turned every photograph face to the wall and draped the frames in black.

I met Talu when she first came to New York. She was perfectly beautiful, and bound to succeed. She left no stone unturned, no lever unused. When she had the price of a room, Talu lived at the Algonquin; if jobless, she haunted the stages where Ethel Barrymore, Elsie Ferguson, and Jack Barrymore were in rehearsal. I've seen her fall at Ethel's feet and devoutly kiss the hem of her gown in true tribute to a sublime talent. Naturally every time she acted that way in those days it brought her attention, made new contacts for her.

To this day she kneels to Ethel when they meet. I gave a party for Talu after she'd made a great success on radio in "The Big Show." Before leaving, she knelt to Ethel, then made a gracious speech to those who'd gathered around congratulating her, and wound up with, "Only to Ethel Barrymore will I kneel. To you, Hedda, I will curtsy."

Then we went into a fond embrace. Whether from emotion or champagne, I don't know, but mist clouded her eyes. Looking over my shoulder at a *Life* magazine photographer who was busily snapping away, she said, "You sordid fool—get the tears!"

And with that she made her exit, a vice-president of the National Broadcasting Company on either arm.

4

I suspected I was going to have a baby when Wolfie started his second season of Gilbert and Sullivan. Dr. Ross McPherson confirmed my suspicion, and together we figured out that he would be born on February 17, 1915.

Woodrow Wilson was President; the Yankees' manager, Casey Stengel, was playing outfield for Brooklyn; movies

were becoming an art as well as an industry—Mary Pickford signed a contract for two thousand dollars a week and two years later was making fourteen thousand dollars weekly; Elmer Reizenstein was so successful with his first play, *On Trial,* that he gave up his job as law clerk, shortened his name to Elmer Rice, and took up playwriting as his profession; and I was expecting a baby.

I never had any doubt of his sex; I always knew I'd have a son and his name would be Bill.

As I was leaving the doctor's office he said, "Report to me in a month." Then I told him I was going to tour the country with my husband until the baby's birth, but I assured him I would be back in time for him to deliver my son.

"But who's going to take care of you in the meantime?" he asked.

"Me."

Dr. McPherson didn't conceal his surprise. He must have thought I was the strangest expectant mother he'd ever come across. I was. Having a baby was natural—my mother had nine—and I didn't want any advice from anybody. I wanted no one telling me what I should eat, how many hours' rest a day I should take, or the best remedy for morning sickness or headaches. I never had any. I ate what I wanted, never upchucked, and was perfectly healthy.

In order to avoid free advice, I decided the best thing to do was to keep the pregnancy a secret. There were no snooping columnists in those days to pry out every kernel of information. Today I realize with shame to what lengths I will go to get a story.

On our travels I discussed my coming motherhood with no one. However, there was a rare character woman, the mother of three, whom I'm sure knew that I was that way. She was bursting to take me under her wing and tell me all, but I'd have none of it. I piled books and magazines on the seat beside me in the day coach so she couldn't sit by me. When she started a conversation on motherhood, I'd abruptly change the subject. Not one soul in the troupe ever had the opportunity to discuss babies with me.

I had a weird and unfounded fear, which I would confide to no one—not even my doctor—that my baby would be born without hair. You see, Wolfie lost all his hair—even his eyelashes—at the age of fifteen, after a violent case of typhoid fever, and it never grew in again. He wore wigs the rest of his life. When I met him he didn't have a gray hair in his wig; when I left him it was more salt than pepper. Anyway, I was ignorant enough to think this baldness could

be inherited, and superstitious enough to think that if I didn't talk about it I could keep it from happening.

I'd read about expectant mothers who sat for hours and days in art galleries looking at beautiful paintings, hoping their children would be artists. Or expectant mothers who listened to the greatest symphonies, thinking they'd bring into the world a musician. Me? I concentrated on a full head of hair and long curly eyelashes.

You might wonder how I concealed the fact that I was expecting. As my girth increased, I wore long, straight coats over my dresses and carried a large flat sealskin muff. Morning, noon, and night that muff was never out of my arms. It concealed more secrets than a magician's bag of tricks.

We traveled from coast to coast while I was pregnant, and not until we reached Cleveland, Ohio, did I cry uncle. On New Year's Eve, Wolfie gave a supper party for twenty and celebrated with champagne and all the trimmings. It took him a good three quarters of an hour to say good night to his guests, and I stood all this time, trying to keep a straight face and a straight stomach. The strain made me frightfully nervous. When we were alone I mentioned it, and Wolfie agreed that I needn't attend any more parties and that I could return to New York from Toronto, our next stop.

In Toronto, as usual, friends of Wolfie's came backstage on opening night and invited us to dinner the following Thursday. "Fine, we'll be glad to come," said Wolfie happily.

I whispered, "You've forgotten your promise."

"What promise?" he said, looking at me with surprise. "Why, we haven't a thing to do. We'll be there." The hour was set, and his friends left. I reminded him that he had made a promise to me—no more parties.

"But this isn't a party—these are old friends. Don't be silly," he said bluffly. "You'll feel better about it Thursday." Not until the day came and he was ready to leave for dinner did he believe I meant it.

After the closing night I went to New York. When I showed up alone at the Algonquin, Frank Case was horrified. "Oh no!" he cried. "You and Wolfie haven't separated, have you?"

I confided to Frank my reason for being there and implored him to keep it secret. Frank was wise. "Everyone will leap to the same conclusion as mine," he warned me.

"Let 'em," I said wearily. By that time all I wanted was to be left alone. And until the baby was born, I never peeped, except to Jack Hopper, Wolfie's son by his second wife.

Jack and his wife had buried their only child a few months previously. Two weeks later Jack's mother, whom he

worshiped, had died. I had begged Wolfie to write Jack himself and tell him we were expecting a baby, but he never got around to it. So the day I reached New York, I told him myself; and I'll never forget the stricken look on his face. Such news, coming on top of his own personal heaped-up tragedy, was too much. You'd have thought I had hit him between the eyes with a sledge hammer.

Mrs. Douglas Fairbanks the first was the only inmate of the hotel who guessed my secret. She followed me for a block the day after my return, and when I got back to the hotel there was a box of baby clothes waiting for me. I called her up and said, "How did you know?"

"I followed you," she said, "and as you walked, you waddled. So did I. So do all women when they're going to have a baby."

Naturally there was much gossiping among my girl friends. They were sure I was ready to announce a divorce, especially when I went alone to see Richard Carle and Marie Cahill in *Ninety in the Shade*. So I thought I'd still their fears and arrange a luncheon for twelve. Noting the eager tone of their acceptance, I was certain that they all expected and hoped for the worst. To surprise them even more, I ordered an orchid for each. They never got the food or the flowers.

I was downstairs arranging the table when I was suddenly seized with a sharp pain. This was January 26—not February 17—and I said to myself, "Oh no, it isn't true; it can't be." But to play safe I took myself upstairs and phoned the doctor. He made me describe my pain and said, "Pack your things, take a cab to the Lying-In Hospital immediately, and I'll meet you there."

"But I can't!" I screamed between pains. "I'm giving a luncheon today, and I've ordered orchids!"

He roared with laughter and said, "Mrs. Hopper, I'm terribly afraid the luncheon will have to be postponed; you're having a baby."

Bill was born at seven o'clock that night. Immediately after his birth I came out of my drugged condition long enough to hear the nurses in the delivery room laughing at something the doctor had said.

Hours later the baby was brought to my room. I quickly looked to see if he had hair. He did. Then I looked at his hands. They were clenched tight in little fists, and in my foggy condition I thought he had no fingers. Turning my face to the wall, I told the nurse to take him away.

At that moment the doctor came into the room. I re-

membered the laughter and said to him, "What was so funny about my baby?"

"Nothing," he said. "He's perfectly normal."

"What did you say that made the nurses in the delivery room laugh?"

"Nothing," he replied.

"Oh, yes you did. I remember hearing laughter right after the last pain."

His face broke into a broad grin and he said, "I remember. I held him up and said, 'Take a good look at him. De Wolf Hopper could never deny that he was the father of this.' "

Louise Dresser had been contacted by Frank Case right after I'd gone to the hospital. Every hour on the hour, she telephoned. Louise was doing a Broadway play with George M. Cohan, and when she heard the glad tidings she made a curtain speech between the acts and announced that I'd given birth to William De Wolf Hopper II.

When Case told the news to Frank Ward O'Malley, a brilliant newspaperman, the latter said, "But it isn't possible. I was talking to her only a few hours ago."

"That," replied Frank, "was the reason she excused herself."

Wolfie was on stage in Chicago when he received the tidings. He burst into a violent perspiration. His pride was so great you would have thought he was the mother too. He remembered to send me a telegram, but forgot the flowers.

He received many wires. Joe Cawthorn sent him one saying: "Well, I'm damned." And Jack Barrymore wired with blithe ribaldry: "I didn't know you had it in you."

Enrico Caruso did better than a telegram. He sent a Victor phonograph with twenty of his favorite records. I still have them. Many, including his English version of "Over There," are collector's items.

I also have one of Caruso's caricatures, which were as effective as his singing. At a Lambs Club Banquet at which Wolfie presided, Caruso took the menu, turned it over, and on the back drew a caricature of Hopper, which he facetiously titled *The Bachelor!!!!!!!*

5

Wolfie closed his season in Chicago soon after Bill's birth; then, with Bill and his Scotch nurse, Nannie, we went to

Siasconset, Nantucket Island, for the summer of 1915. It was a famous actors' colony, where many theater stars of today received their training in one of the first summer theaters. Margalo Gillmore and her sister were members of the stock company. When the going got tough, old-time actors like George Fawcett and Robert Hilliard would be called upon to help out. The Webb Brothers, Roy and Kenneth, ran the theater. Roy has been in Hollywood for ages and is musical director, composer, and arranger at RKO.

Digby Bell, Wolfie's oldest crony, was the one who had persuaded us to go to Siasconset and even got Wolfie to play golf with him. I never could figure out why Hopper agreed, because he never walked unless he had to, never danced except on the stage, never did any exercise unless a part required it. Not until I started caddying for the two did I learn why Wolfie was willing to play golf. The reason was so simple I roared.

Digby took golf seriously. He never spoke, but silently counted every step so he'd know how long his drives were. Wolfie had a wonderful time. With no competition, he talked on and on. I'm sure Digby never heard a word he said, but Wolfie had a field day.

Wolfie insisted upon wearing his oldest alpaca pants for golfing. One day, while bending over to retrieve a ball, we heard a rip. The entire rear end of his pants had given way. He had to sit on the links until I could find a horse and buggy—no automobiles were allowed on the island then—and bring him back a fresh pair.

Golf was saved for the afternoon. Morning was Wolfie's time to sleep. Every day as the clock struck ten Digby Bell presented himself on my front porch and for two hours regaled me with fabulous stories. If I'd had the wit of a chipmunk, I would have written them down and put Joe Miller out of business.

I once asked Digby where he got them. "From my sister," said he.

"Not that beautiful woman?"

"Yes. She has ten little black books filled with them."

There were many naughty ones among them, but Digby, like Wolfie, never told one where vulgarity was in excess of the wit.

When D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* hit the screen it gained many converts and fans for the movies from the legitimate theater stars, who, up till then, had looked upon motion pictures as a not quite bright member of the entertainment

family who should be kept out of sight when the aristocracy of the stage came to call.

So when Douglas Fairbanks was approached by D. W. Griffith to come to Hollywood and star in *The Lamb,* he quickly said yes. He was roundly criticized by many colleagues, but after the picture was a hit Wall Street promoter Harry Aitken sold New York bankers on backing Broadway's top names for motion pictures and got the money to form the Triangle Film Corporation. The biggest names belonged to the oldest faces, unfortunately, and the bankers had no idea then that this was a medium of youth. After the close-up was invented they learned fast!

Wolfie, like the others, had an offer for a year in Hollywood with options. The offer came over the telephone, but he insisted that the man bring the contract to Siasconset for his signature. He and the fellow players who signed along with him entered on a period of having their eyes opened. Wolfie's chief asset was his voice, but unfortunately the pictures were silent. Alexander Carr and Sam Bernard were certain they could pack up their famous characters, Potash and Perlmutter, move them to California, then strike gold without digging for it.

Walker Whiteside, Holbrook Blinn, Laura Hope Crews, Florence Reed, Willie Collier, Billie Burke all beat us West. Lionel Barrymore had already received his baptism in pictures.

Willie Collier was the first big-time kidder of sunny California. But by the time Willie arrived, Wolfie had lost his sense of humor. Collier did his joking with tongue in cheek. He loved the climate; nevertheless he'd always come to our house carrying a bag of oranges. "These are sweet; they're from Florida," he'd say.

As a poor lad, Willie never had had enough to eat. When he became a successful star there was food on his table twenty-four hours a day. After he'd given up his Long Island home to live in California, he joined the Chamber of Commerce and climbed aboard the band wagon like the rest of us.

The pilgrimage of the great names of the theater to Hollywood in 1915 was like the Gold Rush of '49, only this time the gold was in pusses, not pans, and days and nights were wild and woolly indeed. At the year's end they learned there was no gold in the pusses either.

Doug Fairbanks' first wife, Beth, found a home for us and engaged a Japanese couple to run it. The Fairbankses also had a Japanese couple, so when either of us entertained we pooled servants. And such service! Doug, dispensing with

a chauffeur, drove his own car. It was several years before he started to make real money.

Twice a week we dined at the Fairbankses' modest house on Franklin Avenue or they at ours. A welcome guest was William S. Hart, who became so well known on the screen as a Western star that few remembered how good an actor he was on the stage when he and William Farnum starred in *Ben Hur.*

There were three major studios then: D. W. Griffith's, Thomas Ince's, and Mack Sennett's, but few independents. The Christie Boys were still making two-reelers.

There were rivalries but no rapier jealousies like those of today. Feuds weren't as much fun then. You were all in the same business, the studios were close together, and sometimes you were in the same pictures. You kept running into your rival daily. If you went to a party, there he was, and you couldn't avoid speaking. I've remedied this situation today. I can look right through 'em and not see 'em. But in the early days no false fine lines were drawn; no social hoop-de-do, and no such thing as a caste system. Mr. Moneybags from Wall Street was no better than wrestler Bull Montana. You'd see an actor, portraying Christ, riding to the studio in a broken-down Ford. And a trained lion in a limousine behind him. Once when the Ford broke down I saw the lion's car push the actor who played Christ all the way to the studio. They were both in the same picture, and neither could afford to be late. They needed the money.

Those were the days when producers would start a picture with little story and have it written as they went along. They still do. Sometimes it seems as though they'd never written it at all.

Geraldine Farrar came straight from the Metropolitan Opera and made a colossal impression. She played Joan of Arc for Cecil DeMille. She was madly in love with Lou Tellegen, who had made stage love to Sarah Bernhardt. A romatic figure, he gobbled up all the sweets of life and love, then literally cut short his days with a pair of shears—a suicide.

DeMille rented a house for Geraldine not far from ours. When she lifted her voice in song, every person within a quarter of a mile flung open the windows to listen.

Lou Tellegen was making a picture at that time. If Geraldine finished her day's work ahead of him, she'd find out where he was and walk to the farthest end of the lot to

be near him, sit quietly like a modest extra girl until he'd done his scenes, then they'd go home together.

The first time I met Sam Goldwyn—he was Sam Goldfish then and married to Jesse Lasky's sister—we sat together on an outdoor stage to watch his partner Cecil DeMille burn Geraldine at the stake. I still think it was a better picture than Ingrid Bergman's *Joan,* but I could be prejudiced.

During that year I saw many pictures being made. I wanted to learn about them. Wolfie had insisted when I married him that I give up my career. He thought life owed him one wife who'd stay home while he did the acting for the family.

Nevertheless I watched closely. I saw D. W. Griffith put finishing touches on *Intolerance,* with eighty girls dressed as angels fluttering on wires thirty feet above the stage. A third of them became airsick before they could be lowered to terra firma. I'd seen plenty of actresses up in the air, but that was the first time I'd seen thirty of them flutter on wires.

In making scenes, Griffith worked directly from the Bible. He was meticulous about the effect he wanted for the Crucifixion of Christ and waited for foggy days. There were no fog-making machines then.

I remember Griffith, overtired by long hours of trying for perfection, ordering a break and calling for hot tea. The actors who portrayed Christ and the two thieves had been on their crosses four hours without a rest.

"Lower Christ too," said Griffith.

"What about my brothers who play the thieves?" said an actor.

"Lower the thieves too. Get tea for the whole company."

D. W. Griffith was the father of our industry. Many men have tried to claim the title since, but it was due to Griffith that Hollywood grew great. He was one of the great pioneers of the business in developing screen technique, but his cameraman Billy Bitzer, and not Griffith, as is so widely supposed, invented the close-up.

After giving us *Birth of a Nation, Intolerance, Way Down East, Orphans of the Storm,* and *Broken Blossoms,* Griffith started to grow old, and upstart producers said his usefulness was at an end. In his latter years he lived at the Knickerbocker Hotel in Hollywood. Griffith didn't need money; he needed a job to uphold his pride. There was nothing left for him to do in the art form he had largely perfected. He wandered around Beverly Hills and Hollywood, drinking in

one tavern, then going on to the next bar. Several times I saw him almost struck by passing cars.

I went to several bigwigs in the business. "You must find something for that man to do; give him back his faith in life."

"What could he do?" they asked me. They had the face to ask that question! "The industry has passed him by!" Passed by the man who made is possible for every one of them to be where they were! In Hollywood gratitude is Public Enemy Number One.

Frances Marion tells a heart-stopping story of passing Grauman's Chinese Theatre one night when someone's footprints were being recorded in the cement, and of seeing D. W. Griffith, swaying a little, looking bewildered and lost, hovering on the edge of the crowd. His footprints were never asked for, yet no one has ever filled his shoes.

I also talked to the executives of the Motion Picture Relief Fund Country Home. "Give him a job," I begged. "Let him go over the list of applicants—he will give understanding to people who, like himself, have grown old in this business and are now on the shelf. Make the money nominal—fifty dollars a week—D.W. doesn't want or need charity; but give him back his sense of belonging."

Well, they didn't quite see how it could be done.

One of D.W.'s daily visitors to his hotel room was his one-time director Mickey Neilan, the Irishman who engraved so much gaiety on the early years of our business. Mickey and D.W. had a little something in common: they'd both been forgotten.

Finally, on July 23, 1948, Griffith died. Could it be because he no longer had the will to live and just loosed his grasp; opened his hand and let life fall away from him?

It was a fine funeral. The flowers were abundant. Why not, when the studio comptrollers could okay the bills as necessary business expense! I made it my business to arrive early for the services, and took a front seat where I could see everyone and they could all see me. All the Big Brass was there. I had a little list and checked them off as they walked past. Then I stared at them until they were forced to look me in the eye. A more sheepish-looking gang I never expect to see in Hollywood.

Charles Brackett, president of the American Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, who never knew Griffith personally, read the eulogy. Among other things, he said: "There was no solution for Griffith but a kind of frenzied

beating on the barred doors of one day after another. Fortunately, such miseries do not endure indefinitely. When all the honors a man can have are past honors, past honors take on their just proportion. The laurels are fresh again and the applause loud. He lies here, the embittered years forgotten, David Wark Griffith, the Great."

A few months after Griffith's death I had occasion to lunch with Eric Johnston, president of the Motion Picture Association of America, who was very pleased with himself. "Hedda," he said, "you'll be happy to know that the producers are going to build a great monument to D. W. Griffith over his grave in Kentucky."

I looked at him. "Are they out of their minds? The men who would do nothing for him while he lived are now going to show their generosity by buying a shaft of granite to mark his resting place?"

In May 1950 three famous stars of the silent screen—Mary Pickford, Lillian Gish, and Richard Barthelmess—went to La Grange, Kentucky, and dedicated a dignified and honest memorial to the man they loved. It's a simply inscribed seven-foot Georgia-marble memorial. Near the cemetery is the white frame church where Griffith attended Sunday school.

Our first Christmas in Hollywood was unlike any we'd ever known before. Being troupers, we were used to snow on the ground and zero weather. We missed Broadway. We'd like to have seen Maude Adams in her revival of *Peter Pan,* with Ruth Gordon, my old Three Arts Club chum, making her first appearance in it; and Will Rogers, who broke away from vaudeville and joined the class of Ina Claire, Ed Wynn, W. C. Fields, Mae Murray, George White, Olive Thomas, Leon Errol, Justine Johnstone, and Bernard Granville in *The Ziegfeld Follies of 1915.*

Our son Bill was eleven months old, but neither his father nor I got to see him on that day. He had a cold, and his nurse—Wolfie called her the dragon—declared we'd give him germs. She overlooked the fact that we were perfectly well. But some of Wolfie's old cronies came to call, among them Douglas Fairbanks, William S. Hart, and William Crane.

It was a lovely day, but there were no presents from Wolfie. He made a great deal of money and would lend or give a wad to any broken-down actor who told him a sob story, but he never got in the habit of spending it on his wives, except in the form of alimony. I always thought

if he'd bought more roses and fewer automobiles, he wouldn't have had so many divorces.

However, the day was not without festivity. In the afternoon we went up the hill to Bill Farnum's house. There we found the greatest mixture of people you ever saw. Stars, bit players, cowboys, businessmen, old-timers, eastern visitors. Bill was a fine host; you didn't have to be important for him to feed you. "They're all people," he would say happily. He gave with both hands. There were plenty of leeches within arm's reach, but Bill neither knew nor cared. That day a turkey-and-ham parade passed across his dinner table. Bill carved and served and called, in his great mellow voice, for more.

While we were in Hollywood that year my parents visited us. It came about in a curious way.

I had wanted them to visit us, but Wolfie had so many dependents leaning on him that I didn't think it was cricket to burden him with mine. Unintentionally, however, he made it easy.

There was a man who had briefly been Wolfie's press agent some twenty years before this time. Now he was living downtown at the Alexandria Hotel, our best, and had run up a bill of $475.33, which he couldn't pay. So he took a taxi—it must have cost twenty-five dollars for the trip—arrived at our house, and appealed to Wolfie's better nature. "They'll throw me out sure, Mr. Hopper," he said, pulling a long face. Wolfie hadn't seen him in all those twenty years, but said, "That's all right, my friend," and then paid the bill.

I saw red. To my knowledge, that was the fifth time an old acquaintance had cornered him and got money, while there wasn't even a Christmas present for me.

I put my foot down, extracting a promise from Wolfie that before he did such a thing again he'd first talk it over with me. Delighted at being let off so lightly, he promised. Wolfie kept promises nine times out of ten.

Later on Beth Fairbanks and I were downtown shopping, then went to the Alexandria Hotel, where Wolfie was to pick us up and have tea with us. We ordered—the tea came—we drank it—an hour passed. No Hopper.

Finally he rushed in, red-faced and with a guilty countenance. Sure enough, he'd done it again. He clutched at the straw of Beth's presence, thinking to stem my wrath. He blurted out that he had loaned five hundred dollars to his friend Tyrone Power, famous stage star and father of the

present-day movie star Tyrone Power, and got William Farnum to give him the same amount, because Tyrone was starting a revival of *The Servant in the House* and had to have it.

I gritted out, "Wolfie, your promise."

"For heaven's sake, I intend to keep it. This was different. He's my friend; he needed it."

"Naturally," I said coldly. "I hope that Bill and I will have friends come along and give us assistance when we need it, because, from the way things look, we're going to need it."

"But you don't understand. If I hadn't lent it to him, I would have lost his friendship."

"Then you put a price mark of five hundred dollars on friendship?" I said, and dropped the subject. "Do you know what day this is?"

"Why, yes—Thursday, isn't it?"

"Yes, but what date on the calendar?"

"Let's see—June second."

"Does that mean anything to you?" I asked icily.

"No," said the great man.

"No? Well, it does to me. It's my birthday, and you gave away the price of a present. Besides, you broke your promise. So now, if you please, get out your checkbook and make out a check payable to me for five hundred dollars."

He was like a small boy let off a licking! You could see every line of his body relax in relief. If he hadn't had the five hundred dollars, he'd have borrowed it from Beth.

And with that money I brought my parents to California. Things were all right between Dad and me by then. Some time before I had written him a frightening letter, pointing out all his shortcomings as a father, including his dash to the Klondike, leaving his wife and family with nothing to support them but a stack of uncollected bills. The letter cleared the air between us. Later he told me he thought it was "kinda cute." In turn, my father had graciously forgotten about his threat to horsewhip the man who had married his daughter. He was free to lap up Hollywood, which he did. At one time I thought he wanted to be an actor. He had certain qualifications, including no money and a total lack of responsibility.

Many years after Tyrone Power had passed to his reward I grew to know and love his son, who has become more famous than his father. I told him the incident of my birthday, and he then and there wrote me out a check for the full amount. In all honesty, I must add that it came in mighty handy at that particular time.

I did all the tourist things with Mother and Dad—took

them to Catalina Island, hired a fishing boat—and Mother caught a thirty-five-pound albacore. Dad, his ego blasted, kept saying, "Mother, are you sure this is the one you caught?" I didn't let him get away with it. I never let him get away with anything. Sometimes, in the still of the night, I'd wonder if I wasn't too hard on him. Now that I'm older, I'm certain I was.

During those pre-World War I days William S. Hart fell madly in love with Norma Talmadge, and she allowed herself to become halfway engaged to him. However, she insisted on taking a trip to New York before anyone learned of their romance. In New York, Norma met Joe Schenck and they were married. The night we got the news, Bill Hart and I were dining with the Fairbankses. Bill was offered a drink and accepted. We were surprised, because we'd never seen him touch the stuff before, so we asked the reason.

Then he told us how much in love he was with Norma. He admitted candidly that she had never told him she loved him, but she wanted a trip to New York, because New York had always been lucky for her. It was—because there she met Joe Schenck, who could do so many things for her and her family. The marriage naturally was a shock to Hart. It would have been to anyone.

That same night after dinner we read one of Ring Lardner's *Saturday Evening Post* stories aloud—his impressions of grand opera from a gallery seat. We laughed until morning. Many times since I've wondered how the stars of today would react to such an evening. Things were simpler all around then. Intrigues were less complicated; taxes were something only dogs had to pay; we were between wars; and Harry Truman hadn't started to sell neckties.

One time when Lillian Russell came West we invited her to our house for dinner. Fannie Ward, who lived near by, got wind of it. She phoned to ask if I'd bring Lillian over to her house later, and I said I'd ask her.

Lillian laughed. "Dear Fannie, we haven't spoken for years—I haven't the foggiest notion why. I'd love to see her again."

So over to Fannie's we went. She was proud as a peahen of her house and began to show it off. It looked like a peahen, too. From the top she worked down to her bedroom and boudoir. Her bed was enormous and elaborate. I looked at Lillian and knew something good was coming; there was mischief afoot.

As Lillian passed the bed she made a graceful gesture and sighed, "Ah, Fannie, your workshop." And the feud was on again!

Lillian was a Christian Scientist. She wrote a daily beauty column. It wasn't ghostwritten: she did it herself. One day she said to me, "Maybe you think beauty is a blessing. But sometimes it's been a curse too. Why, I even have to make up to take my bath!"

How I wish you could have seen Russell at clambakes at Siasconset. She'd arrange herself on the sand to eat steamed clams, lobsters, and corn on the cob; and no farm hand ever dug into food with greater gusto.

The actors' pal and hotelman, Frank Case, came to Hollywood from New York with Douglas Fairbanks. It was a spur-of-the-moment impulse. Doug had been East on business and didn't want to travel alone, so he brought Frank along for company.

Frank's career as a host began when he was night clerk at the Algonquin Hotel. When he became manager a young couple named Grayson moved in, and Mr. Grayson took Frank's job as night clerk.

When Frank's wife died giving birth to their second child, a son named Carroll, Mrs. Grayson (Bertha) took over as the child's nurse and combined that with the job of hotel housekeeper.

Bertha was one of the most efficient women I've ever known, and it was her flair for organization that first attracted Frank. That being the case, they fell in love. Bertha got a divorce and stayed on as housekeeper after the children were old enough to do without a nurse. Later, when Frank bought the hotel. Bertha took over its management.

Even though Frank didn't seem to realize it, we who loved Bertha felt that their marriage was inevitable. So when Wolfie and I left for California, I begged Bertha to come out for a visit. She promised she would.

Before she could get away, however, Frank came West as Doug Fairbanks' traveling companion. Douglas was an exuberant, bubbling person; his first picture was a hit, he had a contract for more, and he hated being alone. This was before he took a tip from royalty and surrounded himself with a full-scale entourage.

After Frank had been dropped at the Alexandria Hotel, Doug promptly forgot all about him. For three days it rained, and Frank sat and looked at four walls and waited for Douglas to reappear. When Bill Farnum heard Case was on

the scene he went downtown and brought him to our house. It was still raining. Frank said, "I hate California! It's a horrible place!"

"How much of it have you seen?" I asked.

"None," he answered wryly. "And I'm leaving tomorrow."

"You'll stay right here," I said. "We'll show you California."

Frank was so lonely he was willing to fall in with anyone's plans. We did up the town—and the state. We went horseback riding, took him to barn dances. He knew all the New York actors and actresses who were making pictures; they'd all lived at his hotel—many still owed him money! But he was still a tenderfoot. When he was invited to his first barn dance he asked, "What shall I wear?"

"A plaid shirt and a pair of chaps," I replied.

"Good, then I won't have to wear trousers," he said.

Frank and I discussed Bertha at length. I knew he was dying to marry her, but they'd been together so long that it seemed complicated to change the routine.

I decided the time had come for drastic measures. I confided in Harry Aitken—the same gentleman who formed the old Triangle Film Corporation, sold the great Broadway names to the bankers, and brought the oldest faces to the youngest profession—because I had to have his co-operation.

"I want you to go along with the gag," I told Harry, "and when I bring up the subject of Bertha Grayson in front of Frank, please say that you can't wait to meet her, that you've heard so much about her. Then say that if she's everything you've been led to believe, then she's the very woman you've been looking for and you're going to ask her to marry you."

It worked. Frank was almost beside himself. He got Bertha on long-distance and shouted, "I'm leaving tomorrow. We're going to be married the minute I arrive, do you hear?"

What he didn't know was that I had beat him to the telephone and told Bertha that she must get in her trip to California first. I let fall a few interesting bits about Harry Aitken, and she promised to come out.

When Frank arrived in New York, Bertha was pleasant but cool. Had he met this man Harry Aitken? She had heard so much about him. It seems he represented Wall Street and was worth a million or so. A woman could do well with such a husband. Casually Bertha packed her bags and left for California.

While she was visiting us, Frank sent her her first diamond

ring. She promptly sent it back, dropping the hint that Harry Aitken had ordered her a better one.

Bertha fell in love with California and had a ball. We even took her to San Francisco for a great fete there. In the meantime she was getting frantic letters from Frank. Finally she left for New York, and a few weeks later they were married.

At that time the owner of one of the most famous hotels in New York City was owed so much money that, in cash, he was worth exactly three thousand dollars.

Abruptly Bertha put a stop to all the free accounts, changed it over from an actors' free boardinghouse. With her management and his charm, before the crash of '29 they were worth many millions and had bought their first Rolls-Royce.

Frank was the first man in New York to close his bar before Prohibition came, and one of the first to open when Prohibition went. Like many of us, the Cases lost almost everything in the crash of '29, but they started to build again.

They came frequently to California. In fact, they built a home in Malibu. Sometimes Bertha would come out for a month or two in the summer without Frank, or he would come out without her. They bought a strip of land in Hollywood, and Frank insisted he'd build a hotel on it, but she talked him out of it. You couldn't properly run two places three thousand miles apart, and the success of his Algonquin Hotel depended on his personal supervision. If, for instance, some banker brought out-of-town visitors for lunch to sample Sarah's wonderful dessert, the banker also wanted his guests to be greeted by Frank Case.

Both Bertha and Frank were truly liberal-minded. There were two hotel elevators, one for guests, the other for freight. I remember one day a guest was taken ill and an ambulance was sent for. As they were about to put the stricken woman on the stretcher in the freight elevator, Frank appeared. "Put her in the guest elevator at once, where she always rides," he said. If a death occurred in the hotel, other passengers waited while the corpse was taken down properly in the guest elevator.

The first time the Cases met Marian Anderson they asked where she was living: Frank wanted to send her flowers. She explained how difficult it was to get into any first-class hotel.

"You'll come here to the Algonquin," Frank said instantly. And she did, for many years staying there when she was in New York. I don't believe any permanent resident ever ob-

jected to riding in the elevator with Marian Anderson; it was a privilege.

When Marian first arrived she started to use the freight elevator. When Frank heard of it he said, "Any guest who objects to your presence here can move out."

After Frank and Bertha had both passed away, I was genuinely shocked to learn that there had been no remembrance in their wills for Mae Bush, the telephone operator who gave them devoted service for thirty-five years, or for John Mitchell, the clerk known to everyone. I could not understand the oversight.

You can talk about your stars and their talents—Valentino's charm, Clark Gable's American he-man ruggedness, Jack Gilbert's poetic love-making, Wally Reid's boyishness—but Douglas Fairbanks had something none of the rest ever possessed. It was a combination of good manners, looks, athletic skill, and extroverted charm. Doug loved everybody, and his infectious grin and breezy way made everybody love him.

His first wife, Beth Sully, was the daughter of Daniel Sully, known as the Cotton King of Wall Street. For a wedding gift he gave Beth a matchless string of pearls. Those pearls were tickets to Europe, year after year. She'd put them in hock so that Douglas and she might have their vacation to all the gay spots. Upon their return, when Doug got a play, she'd redeem them.

When Sully failed he never was able to rebuild his fortune. Beth inherited a good head for figures, though. Doug did not.

I recall dining at her house in Hollywood one night when four New York bankers were present. After dinner Beth and the bankers continued their conversation about pictures and what she thought Doug was worth to them. A couple of hours later, after Beth had squeezed the last penny out of them, one banker thought to inquire, "Where is Mr. Fairbanks?"

He was asleep in a swing on the front porch. He'd been up since dawn, jumping over barns. If he'd thought he could have made it, Doug would have jumped over the rainbow.

Then there was a Sabbath when Beth and Doug Jr., returning from church, caught Doug, Bill Hart, and me swinging from the branches of a young eucalyptus tree over a high stone wall. Beth was appalled at such unseemly behavior, but what fun I had! After the wall, Bill Hart gave me a lesson in lariat-throwing.

Douglas eventually fell in love with Mary Pickford, who got herself a bungalow in a Beverly Hills canyon. Beth

and I used to walk by the place. I had guilty knowledge of its ownership. Beth was curious about it; the place was so beautifully kept. One day my heart nearly stopped when she insisted on peering through a window. After that I saw to it that we walked in a different canyon. I told her the other one was full of rattlesnakes.

When Beth finally agreed to a divorce, after months of arguing on Doug's part, she demanded—and got—everything he had. His brother John carried six hundred thousand dollars in cash and securities in a suitcase across the continent to New York. Beth had insisted that it be delivered to her there in person. Doug had urged her to gamble with him on the future, but she was determined. She wanted cash and got it.

After Doug and Mary married, he said to his new bride, "For a year I'll be known as 'Mr. Mary Pickford.' After that you'll be Mrs. Douglas Fairbanks, and don't you ever forget it." She never did.

Their European honeymoon was like something out of the *Arabian Nights*. They returned home in a state of ecstasy, determined to make bigger and better pictures. Only Doug's were bigger and Mary's were not better. But both piled up a fortune.

The public clamored to see them together, and unwisely they chose *The Taming of the Shrew*. They weren't the first, nor will they be the last, to trip over the great Bard. They realized their shortcomings and sent for Constance Collier, who had played Lady Macbeth to Sir Herbert Tree's Macbeth in London. She coached them for almost a year and got jolly well paid for it. Yes, and bored too.

Constance would come down to dine with me at my little house. "The palace is too rich for my blood," she would say. "They're sweet to me and eager to learn, but one gets fat and dull and contracts ulcers on too rich a diet."

She and I had many a laugh over the whispered goings on in the famous steam room Douglas had built in his studio. One never knew whom he might meet there—a duke, a lord, Charlie Chaplin, or an English writer such as Eddie Knoblock, who was brought over several times to write for Douglas. That steam room was the great leveler. When he's mother-naked. you can't tell whether a man's a duke, a masseur, or a producer.

The Hindu poet Tagore was brought to Douglas's studio and introduced to him. Douglas never had time to read poetry. He never had time to read, period. There were many bookshelves at Pickfair, and he sent his Japanese butler to fill

them, reminding him that the bindings must match the décor and be of the finest quality. Books were bought by the yard, but never opened.

When Doug was introduced to the great man Tagore, he asked what picture he'd played in. Fortunately, Tagore's knowledge of English was so sketchy he didn't understand the question; nor did Douglas understand why we all roared with laughter. And he wasn't a bit abashed when he learned later that Tagore was the renowned Indian poet.

Mary and Doug bought and furnished what we called "The White House"—Pickfair. It had been built years before by several Los Angeles businessmen as a hunting lodge, presumably to get away from their wives over week ends.

Hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent on it by the Fairbankses, and it's still very impressive. To this day every tourist who puts a foot in Beverly Hills wants to see Pickfair. During World War II it swarmed with G.I.s.

Only the *crème de la crème* got in during Doug and Mary's King-and-Queen days. Once when the Duke and Duchess of Alba were guests Doug borrowed Edward Doheny's yacht to take them sailing, but all they got were sun blisters and old girls like Elinor Glyn—which wasn't exactly what the duke had in mind in coming to Hollywood. He expected to meet the cuddly Hollywood blondes, not knowing that such never passed through the cupid-adorned portals of Pickfair. So the duke, finding Hollywood life not as gay as in Spain, left a week before he was scheduled to go.

Doug and Mary were displeased when Doug Jr. married Joan Crawford. He was too young; he was part of the Hollywood aristocracy—whereas this girl . . . Mary had completely forgotten her own background, which was certainly humble enough.

Of all the rags-to-riches stories, Joan's is the most fabulous. She's also the most completely starlike star we have, working at it twenty-four hours a day. She's earned her success.

When Joan first came to Hollywood from New York, where she'd been a dancer, the only place to display her ability was the Cocoanut Grove in the Ambassador Hotel. Friday night was college night; the Black Bottom and the Charleston were the rage. Everything shook at the Grove, keeping company with the monkeys and the coconuts in the palm trees. I saw Joan win first prize week after week—a silver loving cup. She won so many of the things that if she'd melted them down she could have upped the price of silver. But the college kids finally complained. "Joan Craw-

ford doesn't go to college; this is college night. She's not an amateur. We're college kids, we'd like a whack at the cup."

After that two or three cups were given each college night. The manager couldn't afford disgruntled students, because they grew up into husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, and their progeny would come dancing at the Cocoanut Grove.

My dressing room at Metro used to adjoin Joan's. In the morning she'd be preceded by her maid, who would carry in urns of coffee and turn on a Bing Crosby record. The music would be in full swing when Joan, an avid Crosby fan, made her entrance. The same record would be played a dozen times until she tired of it and the maid switched to another recording—Crosby. I was a Crosby fan myself, but for me the third hearing was sufficient.

Joan wasn't listening merely for pleasure; she wanted to learn. Those were the days when she was taking singing lessons and even threatening to appear eventually at the Metropolitan Opera House. She had many records made of her own voice, but they were played only on her set—not in her dressing room. On the set a special man was detailed to keep the records spinning all day long, except when the cameraman was shooting a scene.

When Joan goes in for something she goes in not just up to her neck but over her head. She's taken up and put down more projects than anyone I know, but made each of them teach her something useful. Whenever she came to the realization that the men she loved simply didn't love back, she compensated for these emotional setbacks by adopting four children. On them she pours out her rich capacity for affection.

She never allows their training to fall to a governess. Joan is their mother, confidante, disciplinarian, and friend. Her house is cleaner, her food tastier, her children better-mannered than those of many others in Hollywood. And her servants walk a perpetual plank.

In Biblical days Joan would have been a Christian martyr, wearing not one but two hair shirts. Today she weaves her own, and if she ever sheds it, she won't be Joan Crawford.

There was a time when she used to drive her own Ford. It was pure white, even to the leather upholstery. A liveried chauffeur sat beside her in the front seat, and on the back of the car was a Fire Department plate. She even had a siren to make mere mortals stop, look, and listen.

She's done over her house any number of times, with each doing costing a fortune. I doubt if she can even remember

the comfortable mission Morris chair she once had in her living room. Now the room features fine paintings, Ming horses, Chinese porcelains; treasures gathered from all over the world. Once she found some rare Chinese silk panels and had them framed under glass for hanging in her dining room.

One night Alex Woollcott dined there. "What are they under glass for?" he asked.

"So nothing will splash on them," she replied confidently. "The gravy I serve doesn't match the color in the background."

When Joan married Doug Fairbanks Jr., Pickfair was in its heyday of visiting royalty, and Miss Crawford just didn't fit in. She was never invited to her in-laws' home until Lord and Lady Mountbatten spent part of their honeymoon there.

They were enthusiastic and curious about movie stars, Lord Mountbatten being particularly interested in Joan Crawford. Not realizing that the family hadn't accepted her, he asked to meet her. So she and young Doug were invited to a ball for the great ones. Instead of being resentful, Joan was pleased as punch. She ordered her first ball gown—white satin with a long train.

On arriving at Pickfair, Joan nervously stepped in front of an onrushing butler in the entrance hall. She kept on going; the train remained under his foot. When she heard a loud rip, Joan turned. Seeing what had happened, she scooped up the tattered remains and fled in tears, with young Doug after her.

Nothing like that could happen to Joan today. She's played too many high—and low—born ladies in too many pictures. Now she'd pick up the shreds, wrap them tightly around her derrière, tie them in a slashing bow, and make an entrance, crying gaily, "How do you like the new style? Your butler helped me create it in your front hall!"

And she'd bring the house down.

After Mary Pickford made *My Best Girl* with Buddy Rogers —a picture which no one except Buddy took seriously— the Fairbankses just sort of drifted apart. Then Doug got to know Lady Sylvia Ashley in London (he never could resist a title), and not too long after that came the sad news of the separation of our king and queen. Nobody wanted it, Douglas least of all. He made a special trip from Europe to patch things up with Mary. Then she turned stubborn.

Mary wanted him to beg, and Douglas bowed the knee to no one. He returned to New York and was moping around,

not knowing what to do with himself, when he dined with Bertha and Frank Case. They talked the whole thing over. Doug said Mary insisted on a divorce; he'd tried everything; there was no hope of a reconciliation.

Frank said, "Well, that being the situation, why not let her have it? Marry Sylvia. If that fails, there's always another divorce court."

Doug said, "I guess you're right. Will you book passage in your name on that ship that's sailing for England tomorrow noon? I'll meet you at the dock."

Both Frank and Bertha were there to see him off.

At three o'clock that afternoon Frank had a frantic telephone call from young Douglas. "Where's my father?"

"Who wants to know?" asked Frank.

"Mary. She tried to get him on long-distance from six last night until one this morning. She didn't leave her name—too proud—but she's ready for a reconciliation."

Douglas had already been at sea for more than three hours. Mary missed the reconciliation, and Sylvia was married on the rebound to Doug, who happened to be a millionaire movie star.

Doug Sr. had promised his mother when he was nine years old that he would never drink. And I never saw him take anything stronger than water until after he married Sylvia. Then it was party, party, party night and day; and Doug drank to get through the interminable sessions. But, like his boyhood idol Theodore Roosevelt, it took only a jigger to start him off and make him more strenuous than usual.

"Why don't you go home?" I said to him once when I met him in a night club, practically out on his feet.

"Can't," he smiled wanly. "I have to wait for Sylvia."

"Someone'll see she gets home. She always does. This is killing you."

"I know, but she's my wife."

I've always thought if he had received that telephone call from Mary Pickford, life might have been different for them both. He might even be alive today, who knows? While he enjoyed royalty and the importance it gave him, international society as a steady diet was wrong for him, and he knew it. Doug was a man who enjoyed going to bed at nine, getting up with the birds, leaping over a wall to wake himself up. He lived by day; the night was made for sleeping, not for howling.

Norma Shearer was Sylvia's best friend. The Thalbergs and Fairbankses were next-door neighbors in Santa Monica and

in and out of each other's houses at all hours. Norma decided to give them a party and invited Doug's closest personal friends.

During the afternoon Doug was taken ill. No one thought it was serious until 7 P.M. when Sylvia phoned Norma: "I'm terribly sorry, but we can't come. Douglas is much worse."

Their place cards were removed from the table and the guests sat down to dine at nine o'clock. During the first course, Norma's butler gave her a whispered message. One or two people noticed that she turned pale, but dinner went on without a ripple.

Afterward they danced, played games, and had a generally gay old time until the party broke up at 3 A.M. As one of the guests got into her car, her chauffeur said, "Did you know that Mr. Fairbanks died?"

"Good lord!" she exclaimed, horrified. "When?"

"Nine-thirty, madam."

Later I asked Norma how she could have done such a thing. These people were Doug's closest personal friends.

"What else could I do? I couldn't say anything—it would have spoiled my party."

There is a bizarre little postscript to Doug's death. Many of his old friends, among them Bull Montana, who had been with him for years and years, weren't invited to the funeral. In Hollywood you have to rate in importance to be invited to a star's funeral; but those who grieve most usually stand outside the church.

Rounding up a dozen or so of the oldest and best friends, Bull said, "We'll say good-by to Doug our way—a way he would like." While lunching at the Brown Derby they planned to steal Douglas away from the mortuary, take him out to a grove under a certain fine old tree, sit in the shade around him, and say good-by to him in a way he would understand.

Someone overheard the plan. When the conspirators went to borrow the body, the undertaker had doubled the guard.

6

Bowing to Wolfie's wishes, I turned down several picture offers during our year in Hollywood—one from the great D. W. Griffith himself—but when our friend William Farnum pleaded that he couldn't find a leading lady for his

next picture, my lord and master changed his mind and gave permission.

That's how I got into my first film, *Battle of Hearts*. For me it was starting at the top. Farnum was William Fox's brightest, highest-paid star. His salary then was six thousand dollars a week; I got one hundred. Later Bill made so much money he paid for the land at Sunset and Western Avenue where the first Fox Studio was built. Farnum had more money then than Fox but, being an actor and not a financier, he never bothered to figure the difference between income and outgo. So he spent as fast as he made.

Bill bought race horses and at one time owned three boats; the largest had a crew of eight men. How appalled I was when his first wife told me that when they returned from their first trip to Europe, Bill was presented with a feed bill of twelve thousand dollars—for his horses alone.

I had visions of fluttering my eyelashes, languishing in a scented boudoir, and indulging in passionate love scenes with the handsome hero in my screen debut. But no! *Battle of Hearts* wasn't a picture; it was an obstacle course.

Playing a fisherman's daughter, I wore a faded blue skirt or a pair of Pa's pants, a man's turtle-neck sweater, hip boots, and a stocking cap. The whole outfit was gussied up with oilskins and sou'wester to match.

In my first scene I drove a yoke of oxen along the beach at Catalina Island and gathered driftwood for our cookstove. We waited on Catalina Island for our principal prop, an ancient three-masted schooner bought in San Francisco, which was being sailed down the coast by two men. We had prepared for scenes on the ship at Catalina; then it was to be taken to Santa Cruz Island and wrecked there. But a terrific storm blew up and our schooner never made port. Parts of the vessel were found; the men, never.

The fishermen Bill engaged for the film thought this an ill omen. We, being actors, never believed those sea-story superstitions and went right ahead.

We moved from Catalina to Santa Cruz. That crossing from Santa Barbara is rougher than the English Channel, and our ship was overloaded. On anchoring we transferred from our large ship to rowboats in order to land on rocks. The first boatload, with Farnum, two male members of the cast, two movie cameras, and a couple of guns, didn't make it. The boat capsized and they went down into eighty feet of water. It's a wonder they ever got out alive, for they were wearing lumber jackets and heavy boots.

The second boat was more successful. Our director's wife,

Mrs. Oscar Apfel, a few authentic fishermen, and I were in that one. Mrs. Apfel and I climbed a long hill to the camp and made for the cook tent. Someone remembered to bring a bottle of whisky along; we uncorked it, and when the wet and maddened star and his dripping friends hove in sight, we let 'em have it right from the bottle.

It was the cook's day off and he was in Santa Barbara, so Mrs. Apfel and I cooked supper—eggs and bacon for all hands. Finishing that feast, our star went to his tent. After helping with the dishes, I looked in to see if Mr. Farnum needed anything. There he was, sitting up in his bunk reading *Julius Caesar* by the light of a lantern. He said it quieted his nerves.

Mrs. Apfel and I, occupying a tent, slept in two army cots with blankets that dogs had fleaed up during many winters. The first night I woke with a start to find field mice playing hide-and-seek over my body. They were hunting for the soap, left uncovered at the head of my bed. They got the soap and me at the same time.

Since our three-master was lost, we had to build a wreck; but before we could tow it to the location selected, it wrecked itself on other rocks. Bill gave up then, and we started shooting with half the deck under water.

I was terrified of deep water. My dear sister Dora had taken care of that. When I was young she elected to teach me to swim in the Juniata River. With my middle draped over a plank, she held onto my rear end. Somebody tripped her, she fell on top of me, and we went to the bottom. She got herself out; I came up gulping. I'm an expert swimmer today, as long as one foot's on the bottom. In deep water I'm as much good as a bluebird in a goldfish bowl.

When I told this to Farnum he hired three deep sea divers from Catalina to come along and protect me. He assured me there was no danger.

Oscar Apfel stood on an improvised railing to direct a scene in which I was to dive off the ship. He said, "Now when I say, 'Camera!' you count three, then dive. I'll save you." Oscar yelled, "Camera!" the railing broke, he fell backward into the Pacific and came up with a baby octopus round his arm.

That killed any plans he had for me to dive overboard. Nevertheless I did have to hang onto a stout piece of driftwood, supposedly in mid-Pacific, and wave one arm while screaming for help. Hidden out of camera range under my log was a husky diver. He stayed by me till the bitter end. That picture nearly ended me; I lost thirty-five pounds.

Watching kids today who have everything done for them —doubles for danger, every sort of device to make them look good without any risk to themselves—I marvel that any silent star ever survived to tell about it.

When I saw *Don Quixote* on the screen I knew Wolfie would never have success in pictures. He was too old, and this medium too young for him.

When his year's contract was up and it was time for him to return to New York, he insisted on motoring. It would be difficult to bundle son Bill, his nurse Nannie, and me into a new car for a cross-country ride. Besides, at that time there was an epidemic of some contagious disease and it was dangerous for children to travel. Wolfie decided that Bill, Nannie, and I should stay in California until the epidemic abated and join him later at the Algonquin.

He broke travel records tearing through the country, held court with theater owners and automobile men wherever he stopped, and had the time of his life.

Having been absent from New York a year, he found getting back in the theater a tough proposition. He wired me about a vaudeville offer—Mr. and Mrs. De Wolf Hopper in a domestic skit on the Keith Circuit. I answered, "Vaudeville is highly competitive; neither of us knows anything about it. I may have a place in pictures, and since you've reversed yourself on letting me work, I'd like to keep at it till I find out."

Wolfie was disappointed but he didn't object. He had the usual offers for road shows, but after a year of domesticity he wanted to stay home. So when the Shuberts offered him *The Passing Show of 1917* at the Wintergarden, with Irene Franklin, Jefferson De Angelis, and Stafford Pemberton, all old friends of his, he took it.

The Wintergarden was a barn of a house and for years had been housing an American phenomenon named Al Jolson, who sang right into the hearts of the people. He was young, he was giving, and the patrons of that house liked what they got.

Wolfie never had a chance. His voice was more on the classical side; he was a dignified comedian; and he couldn't play down to slapstick. He put on blackface only when he was interlocutor for the great Lambs *Gambols*. *The Passing Show of 1917* passed all too quickly for Wolfie.

After a few months in Hollywood, I joined Wolfie at the Algonquin. Living at the hotel was fun for us. Wolfie was just a stone's throw from the Lambs Club, and I could see all my pals again and take in the current plays.

Laurette Taylor did three plays J. Hartley Manners had written for her: *Out There, The Wooing of Eve,* and *Happiness.* Lynn Fontanne was in all three. And Jack Barrymore had persuaded his brother Lionel to leave his canvases in Paris, come home, and join him, Constance Collier, and Laura Hope Crews in *Peter Ibbetson.* That was the talk of the town.

But while Wolfie and I were having fun, Nannie was grousing that a New York hotel was no place for a young baby after he'd had the benefit of the wide, open spaces and the sunshine of California. She hated cities and thought she saw germs on everything she touched.

Instead of acting on the stage, I got busy with the war effort, since that was the year we entered the European conflict, and started to sell Liberty Bonds. I didn't realize at the time how much that experience was to help my acting career. Many were the days when Marie Dressler and I stood on the steps of the New York Public Library at Fifth Avenue and Forty-Second Street, pleading for buyers.

Mrs. Frank Vanderlip, the banker's wife, was boss of our bond-selling team. The day she asked me to take six girls to Grand Central Station to sell bonds, I thought she'd gone off her trolley.

"How can you approach people running to catch trains and ask them to buy bonds?" I cried.

"I don't know," laughed Mrs. Vanderlip, "but I've seen you in action, and I know if it can be done you'll do it."

With that kind of a challenge, I scudded over to the station, deployed girls to strategic points, and went to it. The first day we sold ten thousand dollars worth of fifty and one hundred dollar bonds.

We might have made more if I hadn't turned chicken-livered when a suggestion was made to me by the stationmaster. He whispered that Mrs. Andrew Carnegie was in her private car, bound for Chicago, and why didn't I go in after her?

Today I'd have been on my knees to her in nothing flat, but then I was still shy. Standing on the library steps and being a bond huckster was one thing; braving Mrs. Andrew Carnegie in her private car was another. The very idea of libraries scared me out of my wits, and here was a woman whose husband built them like we build up the national debt. So Mrs. Carnegie got through my net and never knew how lucky she was.

Marie Dressler's social sense was as big as her frame. She thought hobnobbing with members of the Four Hundred was all this and heaven too, and turned herself inside out for the

war effort and for such swells as Mrs. August Belmont, Anne Morgan, Elsie Mendl, and Elisabeth Marbury. Marie and Mrs. Belmont were chums. Why, they even exchanged Christmas presents.

One year Marie, though she could ill afford it, gave Mrs. Belmont an expensive umbrella. Mrs. Belmont didn't have the system our Hollywood stars have employed for years—that of cataloguing and tagging their presents for future giveaways and sending them to someone else the next Christmas.

Mrs. Belmont gave the umbrella away the next year, all right, but the trouble was she gave it right back to Marie! So an umbrella ended a beautiful friendship.

Another of Marie's social ventures was just as disastrous. Wanting to return the many hospitalities of Marion Davies and William Randolph Hearst, she hit on giving a family dinner in her unpretentious but comfortable home in Hollywood. W.R. liked simple food, she knew; she'd prepare dinner with her own hands.

Six of us were invited—Marion, W.R., Frances Marion, Lowell Sherman, our hostess, and I. While we were waiting for the honor guests to arrive, Lowell went around examining Marie's prize possessions laid out on the living-room table. One was a gilded crown, given her as first prize at an Actors' Equity Ball. It had been intended to crown the most beautiful woman present; but when both Ethel Barrymore and Jane Cowl turned up, the judges couldn't choose between them, so, to save embarrassment, crowned Marie as "the most interesting woman."

In front of the crown was a short swagger stick with an ivory cross at one end, given Marie by the Red Cross. Picking it up and examining it, Lowell exclaimed with a leer, "Ah, Marie, your goosing stick!" Before she could hit him over the head with the nearest lamp her other guests arrived.

Dinner led off with Marie's special cocktail, which I wouldn't advise trying, a lethal blend of bathtub gin and vanilla ice cream. Then came a platter of corned beef and cabbage.

The shindig broke up earlier than others I've been to. Guests left the house green around the gills, uncomfortably poisoned by Marie's family dinner. As I look back on it, it seems typical of Marie's quality, which was tragicomedy.

There was one great love in her life, a promoter named James Dalton. Together they backed a revue in London, and while she was playing the star part they were married. Their

money ran out and, unable to pay their debts, they sailed hurriedly for home.

At sea he confessed that he had lied to her; he wasn't divorced and therefore they weren't legally married. She loved him and he had been introduced to everyone as her husband. He swore to her that the instant they landed he'd take care of that little detail of divorce; then they'd remarry, everything would work out dandy, and nobody would know.

His wife, however, flatly refused to give him his freedom. Marie, on the other hand, refused to cut him adrift. Death did that after many years. When Dalton died his wife claimed his body and Marie was forbidden to attend his funeral.

Marie wasn't the only famous person in the theater to have such an experience. When Augustin Daly, Ada Rehan's producer and intimate friend, died, Mrs. Daly claimed his body; and Miss Rehan, whom he'd loved devotedly for years, couldn't go to his funeral.

The most shocking treatment was given Marion Davies after William Randolph Hearst died in her home.

W.R.'s body was flown to San Francisco, where a public funeral was held; and his widow, from whom he'd been estranged for many years, put on heavy widow's weeds and attended the funeral with her five sons and their wives. Some of the most prominent men and women in the United States were made honorary pall bearers. Special invitations to the funeral were sent to people who hadn't seen Mrs. Hearst in years.

The one W.R. loved most, his constant companion and friend, who had turned over to him every penny she had in the world when he needed it most, was not invited to say good-by to the man she loved or to attend his funeral.

Of all the scene-stealers I've ever watched, Marie Dressler was tops. She was a dilly at inventing bits of business. While I was playing with her in Norma Shearer's *Let Us Be Gay*, during rehearsal she would munch candy from a huge box on a table beside her. She liked only the pieces containing nuts, which allowed for loud cracking noises, and made faces if, by mistake, she bit into a cream center.

Director Bob Leonard, while shooting Norma's close-ups, noticed all this out of the corner of his eye. When it came time for the scene, he put Marie's business into the film. Result? Who would bother to look at anything but that lovable, wrinkled old face as she burrowed into chocolates for nuts?

Stars today yell "Foul!" when they're made to work with babies or dogs. Making a picture with Marie Dressler in

camera range was more rugged than working with quintuplets or all of Lassie's clan. Throughout her life Marie was forced to be supporting player to beautiful women. Many a time I heard her say, "When you're as ugly as I am you've got to be crafty as the Devil himself to get attention!"

She came to Hollywood, after Allan Dwan cast her in a picture which was made in Florida, to do *The Callahans and the Murphys* with Polly Moran. The picture was a smash, and Marie was the comedy sensation of the year. But the film was banned by the Catholic Church. Irish groups protested against it, and there were threats to rotten-egg the screens where it was shown.

Despite Marie's great acting ability, her luck ran out. She decided to go to Paris, where she was well known, and open a bistro near the Ritz Bar, specializing in ham and eggs and good coffee for American tourists.

Marie would have quit Hollywood flat, left movies forever, if it hadn't been for the pleadings of her friend Nella Webb, who lived with her. Nella believed in numerology and astrology and said to Marie, "You wait—your day is coming—it's written in the stars."

Nella was right, but the stars had a lot of help from Frances Marion, who believed that Marie could play tragedy as well as comedy.

When Frances was writing the script of *Anna Christie,* she kept visualizing Marie as the old drunken wharf rat and suggested to Irving Thalberg that Marie would be wonderful for the part.

Irving said, "You're crazy. Audiences giggle the minute they see that ugly old face. I have enough to worry me with Garbo's guttural voice and accent without complicating the picture with Marie Dressler in a dramatic role."

"I'm not crazy," said Frances. "To prove it to you, if you will lend me the facilities, I will pay for testing her myself."

Irving quit laughing. "If you really feel that way about it, I'll make a test."

Well, the to-do that was made over that picture! Billboards plastered the country notifying the world: "Garbo laughs! Garbo speaks!" You'd have thought MGM had discovered uranium.

There wasn't one single, solitary laugh in the part of the battered old water-front drunk. Marie Dressler came closer to stealing a picture from Garbo than anyone before or since.

Marie was in! Just before the picture was released I heard one of the biggest of the big shots say: "Who wants to look at that ugly old woman?" Later I noticed the same man wal-

lowing in her shadow as she cut a birthday cake at a party at which civic leaders, society, even the governor himself turned out to pay her honor.

Marie was offered five thousand dollars a week for a radio show. Radio was threatening movies, and the studio head talked her out of it; said he'd take care of her. He did, after his fashion, to the tune of twenty-five hundred dollars a week —just half what she'd been offered.

But even Marie Dressler, like so many screen stars, allowed success and flattery to go to her head. When she came to Hollywood to make *The Callahans and the Murphys,* her joy at being saved from opening a ham-and-egg joint in Paris was so great that she was thrilled over everything. When she first came to visit me she looked around my house and said, "I wonder if you know how lucky you are to own a place like this? A house that you can call your own. I'd be the happiest woman in the world if I could ever have a little nest as sweet as this." And she meant it.

But after she'd won an Academy Award and the adulation of a nation—by then she had a lovely big home in Beverly Hills—she came to my house for dinner one evening. Looking about her, she said, "Darling, with the position you have to uphold in this community. I don't understand how you can afford to live in a little house like this."

I reminded her of what she'd said before. Marie had the grace to laugh and said, "My God! I've changed, haven't I?" She had, but she hadn't noticed it.

Marie eventually died of cancer. Her beautiful car went to her Negro maid, Mamie, and Mamie's husband. They returned to their home in the South, converted the car into a hearse, and the colored folks paid one hundred dollars extra for their dear departeds to ride in an automobile that had once belonged to their friend Marie Dressler.

Wolfie and I were still living at the Algonquin when Bill celebrated his second Christmas. Believing that a Christmas tree and all the trimmings are a child's birthright, I ordered a live tree and got him his first electric train—a luxury in those days. On Christmas Eve I set up the tracks around the tree, building a little village to go with this layout. I was all set to enjoy my son's delight on Christmas morning.

At 5 A.M. Wolfie came in as usual from the Lambs Club with Doug Fairbanks and Bill Farnum. That's the first time I ever saw three grown men wreck a child's train. By the time they'd finished playing with it the train was completely ruined and wouldn't run. I was in tears, more disappointed

than Bill would have been; after all, he'd never seen one.

But during Christmas morning the Algonquin Hotel engineer repaired it and the day was saved for me.

Shortly after the holidays I decided that Bill must have a home in the country. I got a quick argument from Wolfie. Living in the country would take him away from his beloved Lambs Club. While he liked motoring, he hated commuting. He admitted grudgingly, however, that country living would be better for Bill.

We compromised and rented a house in Great Neck, Long Island. We invited to our housewarming a number of New York producers and their wives who lived near by, including the late Arthur Hopkins, Sam Harris, and George M. Cohan. I was uncertain of my new cook and decided to serve mint juleps instead of cocktails; an old southern colonel had just taught me how to make them.

"De cunnel" must have been kin to Robert E. Lee. The juleps were Confederate cannon. Speedily the party became a ripsnorter. One guest, going upstairs for the innocent purpose of powdering her nose, returned to the living room via the banister.

A few weeks after our housewarming, Actors' Equity Association decided to strike for better working conditions. We had to join up with the A. F. of L. to win, and wore banners across our chests and marched up and down Broadway. In defiance of the producers, Wolfie closed his Broadway show. The Shuberts promptly sued him for half a million dollars, and Wolfie was never so flattered in his life!

In Great Neck we met Charlie Goddard, president of the American Druggists' Syndicate. He was president of the golf club, too, and had built a huge home on the clubhouse grounds, with a permanent dance floor on the lawn. Every Saturday night he gave the best parties on Long Island. Broadway stars came out after the show in droves. Marilyn Miller, Leon Errol, Raymond Hitchcock, Hazel Dawn, Francine Larrimore, Frank Craven, Oscar Shaw, Jane Cowl, Florence Moore—name 'em and they were there. They had Sunday and Monday to recuperate. The music was excellent, food the best, liquor ditto. Nobody thought of quitting till daybreak.

One time, passing a front window of the house, I noticed a pair of enormous eyes peering from behind a venetian blind. I saw they belonged to a child, but thought nothing more about it. I went indoors, powdered my nose, and returned to the party.

Years later I interviewed Paulette Goddard beside the pool in Charlie Chaplin's Beverly Hills garden. She was curled up

like a kitten in a big lawn chair and knitted rapidly as we talked, balls of bright yarns rolling in all directions around the poolside. In her simple schoolgirl's dress she looked all of fifteen years old. Charlie had not yet announced on the radio that they were man and wife.

In her role as naïve youngster Paulette remarked, "I've known you since I was twelve; we have the same birthday—June."

When my left eyebrow went up in surprise she explained, "Mother and I used to spend summers with my uncle at Great Neck, Long Island. Those nights Charlie Goddard gave parties I didn't waste my time sleeping. I took in everything from behind the venetian blind—the merriment, the dancing, the champagne, the ones who stole away in the moonlight to the edge of the sound or tucked themselves up in the hedges. I made a vow to myself that someday I'd be more famous than any of 'em."

That vow she's made good. When she has on all her diamonds, Paulette outshines the lot!

While we lived in Great Neck, I saw Mabel Normand many times, mostly at Raymond Hitchcock's home. She was making pictures, and whenever she could steal away she weekended with Zabelle Hitchcock.

Men adored her, and I don't wonder. She had a lovely figure and knew no such thing as fear. Wearing a man's sweater over a one-piece bathing suit—you'd have thought she had nothing on under the sweater—she rode a surfboard attached to Caley Bragg's high-powered speedboat around Long Island Sound. She'd come in with her long eyelashes braided from spray. Of all the actresses I've known, Mabel Normand and Garbo had the longest lashes.

When I had first known Mabel at Great Neck she was doing pictures at Fort Lee, New Jersey, for Sam Goldwyn, with George Loane Tucker directing. I was working there at the time. What a struggle getting from Great Neck to the studio in Fort Lee! I took the train to New York, a subway uptown, caught the ferry, then went out by trolley or taxi to the studio. Sure the De Wolf Hoppers had a car and chauffeur. Wolfie had the automobile. Me? I was saving money to buy a home.

I recall a Sunday when Sam Goldwyn, who hadn't yet met his lovely Frances, motored out to Long Island from New York to take Mabel out to dinner. She didn't want to go and wouldn't come downstairs. He sent message after message up

to her. "Tell him to go home," she'd say. Finally, at midnight, Sam went.

Sam wasn't the only man who paid Mabel hopeless court. I never think of her without remembering *Butterfly on the Wheel.* Mabel was caught just like the heroine of that play.

The lovable little Irish mick had a full career of success and sorrow, but she was more sinned against than sinning. At the tail end of it all, by the time he and she were mere flotsam and jetsam on the muddied waters of Hollywood, Lew Cody married her. It was a fine gesture.

Mabel's big mistake had been to fall in love with the wrong man. All seemed well until she took a certain friend into her home, loaned her clothes and jewels, fed her, took care of her. Mabel's man fell for the girl friend. After that, joy went out of Mabel's life.

She took to sleeping pills to dull the pain. Then she hit the narcotics trail. Once Zabelle Hitchcock and I went to see her at the Ritz Hotel in New York. Her bedroom door was unlocked. She called, "Come in," and we entered. There she was, a shadow of her former self. Barely able to recognize us, she was all alone—except for a mass of floral offerings in the sitting room. Not one had been put in water or taken out of its box. We counted twenty-five boxes filled with dead flowers. The stench was unbearable.

Zabelle and I looked for the white powder we knew Mabel had been using. When we found it we flushed it down the toilet. Then we installed a nurse and left.

Three weeks later Mabel was back in Hollywood.

After her marriage to Cody, Mabel, who had always contributed willingly to every engagement, bridal, or baby shower, said to her good friend Mrs. Abe Lehr, whom thousands of G.I.s were to know during World War II as "Mom": "Anne, I don't suppose anyone would give me a shower. I never had a party given for me alone."

Anne looked at this child-woman whose life we knew couldn't last much longer and said, "You're wrong, Mabel. I'll give you one—with love."

Anne Lehr called every star, supporting player, friend—and enemy—who'd ever received a present from Mabel. She didn't ask them; she demanded that they put in an appearance at her house on a certain date, bearing a gift—and a nice one.

That was a night to remember. Mabel sat on the floor, almost hidden among great beribboned baskets filled to the brim—none of them, mind you, as costly as those she'd always given, but presents nevertheless.

The guests ringed around her on the floor, watching, laughing with her, weeping a little with her, too, while her shaking fingers tore tissue and untied ribbons even when there weren't any knots.

Mabel's eyes were like stars. She said. "Thank you, darlings," a hundred times, her lips pale under the lipstick, and blinking those heavily fringed eyes of hers to hold back the tears.

I was proud of our girls on this memorable, bittersweet evening. I can never let it out of my heart.

7

After closing at the Wintergarden, Wolfie went into a mammoth extravaganza at the old Hippodrome, which occupied an entire block on Sixth Avenue between Forty-third and Forty-fourth streets. It has since been torn down and the space is used for a parking lot.

In addition to singing, Wolfie became ringmaster for a bunch of elephants. He was devoted to all animals but had an absolute passion for the largest, and the elephants responded to his voice as lovingly as any woman. He cooed and they all but cooed back to him.

The beasts were housed in the Hippodrome basement. On his way to the theater Wolfie would pick up a bag of apples, and after the show he'd go below and feed his beloved elephants. Then he'd motor home to Great Neck. But he never brought me an apple; I wasn't an elephant.

Before the Armistice, his pets' trainer was caught in the draft and missed a matinee, so Wolfie took on the elephants alone. Everybody on stage was terrified.

Not Wolfie! During the act he had to lie on his back directly underneath the largest beast. One of its feet landed on the tail of his ringmaster's coat, and Wolfie was pinned to the stage. He pulled at his coattail, his beauty gently raised her foot, and he crawled out from under. Darnedest thing you ever saw. The Hippodrome shook with cheers.

One cold evening as I left the train at Pennsylvania Station after coming in from Great Neck to have dinner with Wolfie, I ran smack into the great Arthur Hopkins. He was in a jovial mood and said, "You've always wanted to act on Broadway. Well, I've got a part for you."

I thought he was kidding.

"Rehearsals start Monday morning. Can you be there?"

Could I!

The play was *Be Calm, Camilla,* by Clare Kummer. It starred Lola Fisher, Walter Hampden, Arthur Shaw, and Carlotta Monterey, who later married Eugene O'Neill.

I played a comedy nurse. Not knowing what I might be called upon to do on the stage, I prepared for my part by going to the Lying-In Hospital where Bill was born and asking a nurse to teach me how to make a bed professionally. I didn't use the knowledge on the stage, but it has come in mighty handy ever since. The most restless sleeper couldn't rumple my bed after I've mitered the corners.

Opposite me was Arthur Shaw, a talented actor and Harvard graduate. Whenever he got a hit play he couldn't keep away from the bottle. Before this one he had stayed for two mortal years on the wagon. Doing everything to earn a living except act, he'd even worked as a section hand on a railroad in Texas. This time, however, he was sure he was cured.

I was entranced by Carlotta Monterey, a beauty with the most gorgeous clothes and the air of a *femme fatale.* I noticed her sneaking a look at me now and then. I wondered, How come?

One day we were sitting around telling stories during a lull. I contributed one of Digby Bell's best. Carlotta jumped from her chair, dashed over, shook my hand, and exclaimed, "Why, you're alive and human after all!"

I must have looked nonplused. When the rehearsal was over, she added, "I was warned that you were a prude—scarcely knew the facts of life—and that I'd better watch my tongue."

I went off into gales of laughter. Anybody married to De Wolf Hopper not know the facts of life?

Carlotta regaled me with her life story. It was as good as her last and present husband Eugene O'Neill ever dreamed up. She told one yarn about a delightful summer she had in California, when her companion on many occasions was Lou Tellegen, the French actor, who was the Charles Boyer of the silent films and who gained fame as Sarah Bernhardt's leading man. Carlotta knew him before he married Geraldine Farrar.

Neither Carlotta nor Lou took this summer seriously, but it seems, in the light of the story Carlotta told me, that Geraldine wasn't let in on that little secret. Lou, being a weaver of fancy tales and knowing the art of keeping a woman's interest at fever pitch, had evidently neglected to

tell his bride that he and Carlotta had never been seriously in love with each other.

Several years later, as Carlotta stood on a Fifth Avenue corner waiting for the lights to change, a limousine drew up in front of her. Just as the policeman waved on the traffic, the woman inside stuck out her tongue at Carlotta. The woman was Geraldine Farrar. Lou must have talked in his sleep. "I stood there and laughed for five minutes," Carlotta told me.

I loved *Be Calm, Camilla,* my part in it, the company—especially Arthur Shaw's performance. The play was a hit, but Shaw couldn't stand success and, sure enough, one night he didn't show up. The understudy, our stage manager, went on for him, but the whole performance fell flat. I knew that to save the play Shaw would have to be found.

When Wolfie came by to pick me up I told him about it. "I've got to find him," I said.

"Are you crazy?"

"No, I just love the play—I don't want anything to spoil it."

In his lower register he thundered, "No wife of mine goes out in the middle of the night to look for an actor!"

"I'm sorry; if you won't go with me, I'm going anyway. I've got to find him."

He fumed, but he went with me. I guess I was a problem to him sometimes.

We tried half a dozen hotels Arthur was known to haunt. No luck. Next day I explained to Frank Gillmore, then executive secretary of Actors' Equity, what had happened, then asked him to help. I also called Arthur Hopkins to inquire if he'd take Shaw back. He said he would if Wolfie and I would be responsible for him: bring him to the theater for each performance and take him home with us afterward. Without telling Wolfie of this, I said we would act as Shaw's keepers.

Arthur was gone five nights. Roland Young, son-in-law of Clare Kummer, asked Hopkins to let him go on in the meantime.

"The part's not suited to you," said Arthur, "but—well—okay."

The character was a Broadway wise guy with no respect for anyone till he met a nurse in the play. She kinda stopped him in his tracks. He was brash, funny, loud, and she liked it.

Roland went on at a Saturday matinee. You couldn't hear him beyond the fourth row. When the curtain came down

Hopkins said, "Roland, do me a favor. Don't ever play it again."

Monday night there was Mr. Shaw in his dressing room on the second floor. I went up and knocked at his door. I'd never before seen such a shell of a man. I said to him, "I'll send out and get you some coffee."

"Nice of them to let me come back," he mumbled.

"We've looked for you for five nights," I said.

"I know."

"Have some coffee—you'll be all right for the performance."

It was murder watching him try to force his mind clear of the fog. But he got through the first act with only a few stumbles. As I was going to my dressing room, hand in hand with Walter Hampden, I heard Lola Fisher say, "He should be made to apologize to every member of the cast."

"That would be awkward," I said, "inasmuch as I've told him how happy we are to have him back."

"You?"

"And so did I," said Walter Hampden.

But the play never was quite the same again. When Shaw disappeared a second time we closed. On the last night Arthur Hopkins came to my dressing room. "Hedda, I believe you'd go on with it for nothing. You're the only one willing to go on at all. But even you can't play the whole thing yourself. I only hope you've enjoyed it."

I loved that little man. It was a great pity he never came to Hollywood. Yet, thinking back on it, I don't believe he could have taken the pressure that would have been poured on him. It takes steel to survive in our own peculiar kind of Blunderland.

Sam Goldfish and Edgar Selwyn went into partnership, formed their own picture company, and rented a barn of a studio in Fort Lee, New Jersey. Making pictures under the same roof was Lewis Selznick, the father of Myron and David.

Sam gained more from this artistic partnership than money. He got a new name. Taking half of Edgar's last name, he became Sam Goldwyn.

Edgar's writing wife, Margaret Mayo, had taken a company overseas to entertain the soldiers; and while abroad, she had fallen in love with another man. It was then that Edgar made the priceless remark: "I regret that I have but one wife to give to my country."

I don't know whether it was Sam or Edgar who remem-

bered me, but when I was invited to play in *Nearly Married,* with Madge Kennedy, I didn't say no.

At Fort Lee there wasn't any caste system. All dressing rooms were alike—matchboxes, open at the top—building material ran out before they got to the ceiling! It was real neighborly unless you had something to conceal. When I think of studio dressing rooms today—bungalows with living rooms, bedrooms, make-up rooms, kitchenettes, showers, better than many stars have at home—I have to laugh. The cells where we dressed at Fort Lee were uncomfortable, cold, smelly! We didn't complain. It put granite in our spines.

I met Mary Garden first at the Fort Lee studios. She was putting her favorite operate role, Thaïs, on the screen. It was all wrong for pictures, but—like Sir Herbert Tree with his *Macbeth*—Mary insisted on doing it just the way she'd done it at the Met.

In one scene she wore a finely pleated chiffon gown. On the Met stage she hadn't worn anything underneath. She didn't realize that the strong lights used for pictures have a peculiar way of fastening on the strangest areas.

After the first rehearsal she was requested to put on some underclothes. "Why?" she demanded. "I never did at the Met."

The "boys" showed her the scene as it had been photographed. "Heavens!" screamed Mary. "Why didn't somebody tell me?"

Her leading man was Hamilton Revelle. He was all over the place trying to make a good impression on Mary. The first day he came on the set he said, "Miss Garden, may I kiss your hand?"

"It's rather dirty, but if you don't mind, I don't," she said.

So he kissed it. Every morning after that he showed up at her dressing room to kiss her hand before going on the set. Oh, he was gallant as all get out.

One morning when he knocked at her door there was no answer. "Oh-hhh, Miss Gar—rden," he called romantically.

No answer.

"Miss Gar—rrrden—where are you?"

A singsong voice came from the end of the corridor. "I'm in the toi—let——" The voice was Mabel Normand's. Revelle's hand-kissing days were over.

Music was Mary's life. Years later a wise man at MGM engaged her to scout singing talent. She found some fine voices but was content to work for such a small salary that the big boys had no respect for her. That's our Hollywood, where everything is measured by a price tag.

Mary couldn't afford a car and chauffeur on what she was paid. When she left a party, and her hostess suggested sending her home in her own car, I've heard Mary say, "Oh, no, thanks; mine's waiting." And then she'd walk blocks to find a taxi.

Mary's father was living in Riverside, California. She was devoted to him and went to visit him every Sunday. People took it for granted Mary was getting an astronomical salary. After her father's death the story went around that he'd saved the princely allowance Mary gave him and left her a million dollars.

When Mary was in Los Angeles on a lecture tour in 1950, I recalled the story to her. "You didn't swallow that fairy tale!" she exclaimed. "You knew my Metro salary; you knew how I lived. I only wish there had been some truth in the story!"

On her lecture tour Mary was an inspiration to young and old alike, still the queen. She retains her figure by eating properly. "I get my vitality through the air I breathe," she told me.

She hates microphones and was furious when they were put in front of her. But she used them because people in the back rows had paid to hear her too.

When Mary entered a Hollywood drawing room on her recent visit, Walter Pidgeon, Jeanette MacDonald, even the imposing Ezio Pinza took a back seat! No one ever takes the spotlight away from Mary.

Not long after I finished *Nearly Married* with Madge Kennedy, I had a brain wave about a popular novel titled *Virtuous Wives.*

The book had been sold for a movie, and George Loane Tucker was to direct. I met Tucker when he worked with Mabel Normand at Fort Lee. As a matter of fact, she brought him to dinner at my house. So I felt I knew him well enough to beard him in his den and ask for the part I wanted in *Virtuous Wives*—that of a dressy society matron who helps her ruthless husband entice the handsome mate of the leading lady into her home and into her husband's Wall Street office.

I walked into George Tucker's office one afternoon dripping femininity. Dressed in gray chiffon with a gray hat trimmed with ostrich feathers, I carried, believe it or not, a gray chiffon parasol.

Why George didn't laugh in my face I'll never know. But he looked me over with a twinkle in his eye and said, "You're perfect for the part. Just what we want: the smart,

sophisticated, Fifth Avenue matron type. There's one slight hitch. The star, Anita Stewart, has to okay you—it's in her contract."

"So when does she do it?"

"She's making tests out at Vitagraph Studios in Brooklyn. You'll have to go over there—we send all the players there for her inspection. My manager will pick you up tomorrow and drive you over." He rubbed his chin. "But," he said, "you look awful smart to me."

"Don't worry—I'll get by."

He introduced me to his manager and we made a date for ten o'clock the following morning at Pennsylvania Station.

I was on time; so was he. For some minutes I watched him look about, then I strolled over and said, "Well, shall we go?"

He all but swallowed his Adam's apple. "You're not the woman I met yesterday," he gulped, "or—are you?"

"Simple," I said, licking my chops. "Yesterday I dressed for Mr. Tucker. Today I'm dressed for Miss Stewart." I was wearing a ten-year-old hat, a dress almost as ancient, and shoes that had seen better days. I looked like something left out in the rain.

"I get it," he said, roaring with laughter. And away we went.

Anita Stewart was a top star then. Her salary was thirty-five hundred dollars a week—comparable to ten thousand dollars today.

When I was introduced to her she looked me over approvingly and said, "You're perfect—what I dreamed of for the part. What a shame to bring you all the way over here——"

I laughed to myself. She may have dreamed—but not of me.

So I signed for ten weeks at five hundred dollars a week. With that important piece of paper clutched in my fist, I took off for Lucile, Inc.—Lady Duff-Gordon, sister of Elinor Glyn, and one of the greatest dressmakers of them all. She was the cream in Irene Castle's coffee. For years Irene wore only clothes designed by Lucile. My idea of heaven was to have Lucile gowns the rest of my life. I was invited to her showings but was never rich enough to buy. But she had always said, "When you get a dressy picture, come to me."

I knew I could make a reputation in *Virtuous Wives*, so I shot the works. For sinking my entire salary, five thousand dollars, I got twenty-five thousand dollars' worth of the most lovely, feminine, tempting clothes you ever saw.

Miss Stewart evidently decided to save her weekly thirty-

five hundred dollars. Her clothes looked as though they'd been run up by loving hands at home.

She didn't see my glad rags until we were on location at Huntington, Long Island. The first glimpse she had of me was when I was standing at the entrance of a marble palace, dressed to the teeth in a Lucile tea gown of lilac and mauve shades of chiffon. It was like a cloud pulled down out of the sky after a summer shower. It floated, and so did I. I was thinner then.

Anita had arrived from New York with her husband, Conway Tearle, and was wearing a dark blue taffeta number. My week-end guests, in the picture, were thirty expensive extras, dressed for my marble setting. Also on hand were cameramen, assistants, props. But we never got the scene that day.

Said the star, turning to Mr. Tucker, "I'm sorry, but she isn't dressed properly."

"Who?" he asked, knowing damned well *who*.

"Her. That Hopper woman."

"What's the matter with her?"

"That floating thing—what is it?"

I stepped up. "Lady Duff-Gordon designed this especially for this scene," I said. "Perhaps someone else could do better."

"But what is it?" the Stewart said again.

"It's a tea gown," I said, "to be worn at home for tea, cocktails, or informal dinners." I hit below the belt. "I wear such gowns in my own home on such occasions. In the scene this is my home."

"I don't like it," she said coldly.

"I'm terribly sorry, but it was made for this scene. I have nothing else to wear. If you'd like to delay the picture a couple of weeks while I have something else made . . . I never wear anything ready-made." As heaven is my judge, I said it with a straight face.

Tucker put in, "I'm sorry you don't like it, Miss Stewart, but I'm afraid we can't do anything about it now. Let's get on with the scene."

"I'm not going to, Mr. Tucker," said the star, and walked off the set.

For three days, at great expense to her producer, she sulked. I spent the three days having a fine time: sailing on the sound, swimming, riding. On the fourth day Miss Stewart saw the light and we began shooting.

The air was charged with electricity. I couldn't be fired—I had signed a contract and had already spent my money. But

thunder rolled with each change of costume. When I shoot the works, I shoot 'em! My clothes built to a crescendo.

We'd spent ten days in Huntington when I had to wear a four-hundred-and-fifty-dollar evening gown—red satin, pulled up in a pouf in back, with tulle and paradise feathers. We all but needed the riot squad for that one! We didn't have mobile hairdressers in those days and were expected to jolly well curl our own hair. I decided that my coiffure must be in keeping with the gown, so I brought a hairdresser down from New York.

Miss Stewart saw her chance. As long as I had a hairdresser, her hair could be done too. I paid the bill, but that's neither here nor there. Or is it?

Many times during the picture our star waxed temperamental. When she felt chilly, or out of the mood, she'd refuse to work. I'll admit I contributed some provocation.

When she wouldn't play ball, Mr. Tucker would say, "Okay, Hopper, I'll give you the scene." And, by golly, he did.

I ended up with four times the footage I started out with. The picture made a solid reputation for me as a clothes-horse and upped my salary.

Producers who didn't know my name began to say, "Get what's-her-name who played the rich woman in *Virtuous Wives*—she'll dress this."

Believe me, there was no love lost between Anita Stewart and me for many years. Then she married the very rich George Converse. She was no longer interested in a career and learned to laugh then at her earlier stuffiness. So did I.

I'll never forget one bathing scene we shot. Of the fifteen girls holding hands and rushing into the surf, one pretty lass was wearing a form-fitting suit of purple velvet, with stockings to match. Yes, those were still the stocking days for bathing beauties.

After we'd rehearsed, I saw the girl whisper to Mr. Tucker. He shook his head. "Get back in line."

"But, Mr. Tucker—please—I can't——"

"Get back in line!" he bellowed.

We dashed into the water, and when we came out, lo—and I do mean low—her beautiful "legs" (symmetricals to you) were down around her ankles. They just wouldn't take water. I've never seen a girl so crushed. Not only was she sent home in disgrace; she'd ruined a lot of high-priced padding and bared her matchstem legs as well.

All the time that picture was being made a little round

man kept getting in our way, peeking out from behind some bush just when we were ready for a take.

Always the top sergeant, I'd say, "Hey, you're in the cameral Mind getting back where you won't be seen?"

He'd squeak, "Sorry," and scamper off.

When the picture ended he came up to me and said, "Miss Hopper, I want to thank you for all you've done to help in saving this picture."

"Well, now, that's generous. Who are you?"

"I'm the producer. It's my first picture, and it might have been my last."

And that's how I met Louis B. Mayer.

In 1919, I renewed my friendship with Marie Dressler's greatest champion, Frances Marion. After writing *Pollyanna* for Mary Pickford, Frances came to New York to do the screenplay for *Humoresque* and also to help director Frank Borzage choose an actress capable of playing the mother role.

While lunching with Frances and Frank at the Algonquin, they asked if I could suggest anyone for the part.

I did. Emily Fitzroy.

Borzage said, "Emily's a fine actress, but she's English. This role is that of a very sympathetic Jewish mother who brings up her family in poverty on New York's East Side. When she discovers her son's great love for music she sacrifices everything to nurture his talent."

After Frank's description I said, "I've seen only one woman who fills that bill. Her name is Vera Gordon."

"Good. Where can I find her?" he asked.

"How would I know? I've never met her."

"Well, for heaven's sake, what makes you say she's it?"

Then I told him of her performance in *The Gentile Wife*, in which she played a Jewish mother, and of how she stole the play from Emily Stevens, no mean feat.

With that Borzage was off like a hound dog in search of her. He located her touring with a vaudeville act, paid off the troupe, and signed her for *Humoresque*.

When the film was finished, its producer didn't think it would be a success. He couldn't believe that the public, which then fed on sappy love stories, would respond to the story of a lower-class Jewish family. The release of the picture was held up for many months. Only when the releasing company had no other film to show did *Humoresque* go into the theaters. Its success was like an explosion, and Vera Gordon's fame shot sky-high overnight.

Years later, when she was established in Hollywood, I met

her. Borzage had told her who suggested her for *Humoresque*. When she thanked me, that was another great performance.

Frances Marion became an important friend along life's way. When I met her she already had arrived as a writer and overseas correspondent and was getting four thousand dollars a week for turning out scenarios that didn't talk. "Why, I got five thousand dollars for *Battle of Hearts*," she told me with a laugh, as though she had stolen the money.

Photographer Arnold Genthe said proudly that Frances was one of the ten most beautiful women in America. Born in San Francisco, she was slight, of medium height, with dark brown hair and lustrous eyes. Terrifically feminine, no man who married her ever wanted to give her up. She was to have four husbands. The fourth, director George Hill, committed suicide because he couldn't live without her.

In her home city Frances painted posters for commercial advertising. Following an interview with Elsie Janis, she became interested in the theater.

Pictures then were really in their infancy, and Frances came to Los Angeles thinking she could get a job painting posters. That was years before Hollywood learned about art; before the town knew how to pronounce Renoir, Utrillo, Van Gogh, or Picasso, and before each home looked more like a modern museum than a place where little children could play; before it was said of a well-known producer: "He ought to hang his movies and release his paintings."

Hollywood wasn't interested in Frances' posters, but she was a striking storyteller. People began to catch onto a talent she didn't realize she had. "Why don't you write down these yarns?" they said to her. "They'd make good movies."

Always willing to take advice, she followed suit. Whenever she had a couple of hours to waste she'd slash off a tall tale and sell it to some eager-beaver producer. She wrote most of Mary Pickford's early pictures; also Marion Davies'.

Frances was married quietly to Fred Thompson, her third husband, in New York in 1919. It was quite a story.

Thompson, a handsome Princeton All-American, was chaplain of a regiment in World War I. His company was stationed near Hollywood. Mary Pickford was "Sweetheart of the Regiment," and the day she saw the chaplain she decided to go to church regularly. She spilled over about him to Frances, who said offhand, "Sounds as though you expect Thompson to give Doug Fairbanks competition. What d'you want to bet I can get a dinner date with him first?"

"You've got a bet," said Mary. "We'll see him tomorrow."

Frances had forgotten about it when Mary called next day to say, "We're on our way." Frances never backed out of a deal in her life, and that evening she—not America's Sweetheart—had dinner with Fred Thompson.

Later he was sent overseas. Mary Roberts Rinehart just happened to wangle Frances a job as correspondent, so she went over too. Several times she just happened to turn up in the vicinity where his regiment was billeted. Chaplain Thompson planned to be a college teacher when the war was over. But when the war was over Frances just happened to marry him. When I asked her why, she said candidly, "Couldn't get him any other way."

She first introduced her bridegroom to us at a dinner party given by Zabelle Hitchcock. When Fred walked into the room, we all gasped. Here was America's Greek God, who had Youth, Virility, and Decency. Every girl in the room envied Frances.

Before the Thompsons took off for a European honeymoon which lasted eight months, they gave a party at the apartment they'd rented from Rachmaninoff. Marie Dressler's escort was a shy young fellow from Tin Pan Alley. She asked him to play the piano. He obliged. We listened. During the evening, while the young man was running his hands lightly over the keyboard, Marie asked, "What do you call that?"

"Oh, it's a little thing I'm working on."

"Well," said Marie, "someday the world will listen to that little thing." The world did, for that was the beginning of "Rhapsody in Blue." The young man was George Gershwin.

While touring Ireland, Fred Thompson saw a magnificent gray Irish hunter. The horse was an outlaw, and Fred picked him up for a song and named him Silver King. Man and horse fell in love with each other; the animal couldn't be handled by anyone else, but with Fred he was as coy as a kitten.

Seeing them together gave Frances an idea. "You were born to be a Western star," she said to Fred. She kept on saying this, and began working on a scenario for a man and a horse: a man with Fred's looks and principles, and a horse like Silver King.

The newlyweds and the horse returned from Europe, and it wasn't long before Fred was starring in pictures and earning ten thousand dollars a week. He was the first Western star to give his horse top billing.

Silver King was the most temperamental star I ever saw.

He'd work with children on a schoolroom set, do everything expected of him, treat the kids as though they were fragile porcelain until the scene was done and Fred left. Then when a stableboy came to lead him off, Silver King would kick the set to matchsticks.

Frances became more ambitious for Fred and decided he must be a dramatic actor. In a script for Mary Pickford she wrote in a part for him and persuaded Mary to take him on as leading man. Mary was happy to oblige, but it created great jealousy between Doug and Mary and nearly broke up Marion's lifelong friendship with Pickford.

Frances made piles of money too. She'd worked for Mr. Hearst in those days when success was apt to be measured by how close you came to Mr. Hearst's fabulous way of living. She and Fred took seventeen acres on top of the highest hill in Beverly, away from the gophers, and built a Paradise. It was a great, castlelike place with twenty rooms and an extra house for the servants. There was a twenty-five-thousand-dollar stable with mahogany floor, because nothing was too good for Silver King. The horse had his own riding ring and a special Packard trailer so he could take the bumps on the hilly road without discomfort.

Also there was an exercise ring for a bull they owned. The bull, Pansy, was a love with a taffy disposition. Fred's setting-up exercises included getting hold of that bull's horns and throwing him. Oh, Silver King and the bull lived in style up there on the hill, snorting snobbishly as they looked down on the common herd of Beverly Hills.

Frances had a beautiful Scottie which had a habit of running away. Halfway up to her hill lived the Fred Niblos, who owned a vicious police dog. One day the dog killed Frances' Scottie. The blow was felt by everyone in Paradise. Fred and Frances did nothing, but their gardeners (they had twelve) took things in their own hands. For days they were busy about a mysterious activity of their own.

It was soon explained. In the night the gardeners dumped twelve bagfuls of snails on the Niblos' lawn. In no time they didn't have a living flower.

Fred and Frances led an idyllic life in Paradise for nearly ten years. Between them they earned more than three million dollars. Not long ago I asked Frances what became of all the money she'd made in her lifetime. She smiled in a satisfied way and said, "I spent it!"

8

Charles Coburn played Old Bill in the top war comedy, *The Better 'Ole,* on Broadway. Wolfie adored the role and bought the touring rights to the play for certain sections of the country.

After gathering together a company, he played *The Better 'Ole* for two seasons. I stayed home. Never one to neglect the life of luxury when he had the money to pay for it, Wolfie traveled in a private railroad car, which was much too expensive for an actor with as many obligations as Hopper had assumed.

While he was on tour another Christmas rolled round. Wolfie wrote to ask what I'd like. This time I was ready with an answer.

"A string of pearls," I wrote back. "I know where I can get a lovely one for twenty-five hundred dollars."

The mails were too slow for his reaction. He wired: "Impossible."

I answered: "Forget it! It's pearls or nothing." I held on like a puppy to a root; I got the pearls. They're small but they're real, and one day will look lovely around the neck of my granddaughter Joan.

While Wolfie traveled, I went from one picture to another. Making *Conquest* for Lewis J. Selznick was quite an experience. We went to Banff, Canada, for outdoor spring scenes, but on our arrival spring was muffled to the top of the trees in snow and ice. We settled down to wait for the thaw. For three months we waited. No one in the Selznick company had thought to check on the weather in Banff. We had a delightful time, though, skating and tobogganing, while we waited.

In one scene for the picture I was supposed to catch a trout in a mountain stream. If you don't know how, it's tricky business. Just in case, they bought a trout at a nearby hatchery, located a running stream, hooked a fish on my line, and ordered me to pull it out. I felt like a monster! I was glad there were no real fishermen in the company to see my unsportsmanlike act.

This was neither the first nor, I predict, the last unsportsmanlike business I've seen put over by picturemakers. Recall the wild-animal stampede in *King Solomon's Mines?* Where Deborah Kerr, Stewart Granger, and Richard Carlson hide

under a frail shelter while thousands of zebras stream over them? Like everybody else, for me that was the highlight of the film—until I nosed out how it was done.

It seems that a special camera unit had been shooting in South Africa for months to get shots of a spontaneous stampede of animals. No go. They set fire to bush, fired off cannon; still they got only minor effects. That was enough to be supplemented, however. They finished it off on the back lot at MGM.

Zebra stripes were painted on hundreds of donkeys. Guns were shot off to run the terrified burros through a funnel-shaped road. On screen the effect was marvelous. This was a different kind of donkey serenade, and not the first time a bunch of asses saved a picture.

I was excited when I landed a part in the silent film *Seven Keys to Baldpate* with that Yankee Doodle Dandy, George M. Cohan, the man whose song "Over There" gave wings to the tired feet of war-weary doughboys.

Cohan lighted up the New York theater like Thomas Edison illuminated the world. His humor was pure American. He might have coined the word. If he were alive today, Cohan might even write a play that would so ridicule the Commies that we'd never have to use the atomic bomb.

I didn't know George well, but I'd known of the rivalry between the Lambs Club and the Friars. When Wolfie was Shepherd of the Lambs, Cohan was Abbot of the Friars. When I supported Cohan in the picture, the Lambs were top dog.

The night the film was finished, hundreds of still pictures were to be taken; but Cohan had other ideas, so he took our director to dinner and they proceeded to work themselves into a merry, merry mood.

Standing still for photographs worked against Cohan's nervous system. "I contracted to make moving pictures," he said. When the two returned to the studio, Cohan insisted on treating the company, too, and sent out for cases of champagne, which we drank out of tin cups. Finally electricians, props, and set workers rebelled at this rich affront to their stomachs. They pushed a spokesman in front of Mr. Cohan. "Please, can't we have beer?" He laughed at their independence and sent for beer.

The stills were shot, but where Cohan's face should have been there was nothing but a blur. Not one picture was fit to print.

In one shot I was supposed to faint, and Cohan had to

bring me to with a glass of water. He sneaked a slug of whisky in it and I nearly choked.

"Serves you right!" he shouted. "A Friar playing cupbearer to a Lambs' wife, indeed!"

Roots may be expendable to grownups, but they are important to children. Bill loved the country, where he could have animals, freedom, and be outdoors the livelong day. I decided it was time to buy a permanent home.

Wolfie loved the comforts of a home, but—though he'd pay any price for a new automobile—he hated the responsibility of owning a house. He never bought a piece of real estate in his life and wouldn't put money into a home. So if we were to have one, I'd have to buy it.

I found just the right place in Douglaston, Long Island, a shout and a holler from Great Neck. I had the initial payment, ten thousand dollars, saved from my movie jobs.

"Are you out of your mind?" said my spouse. "You'll never be able to make the payments."

"My pictures will do that for me. Anyhow, even if I lose the money, I'm going to make the try."

Every time a payment came due, my picture jobs enabled me to meet it. I used to go through the house and point out things that my working with various stars had paid for. My grand piano came from Alice Joyce; Alice Brady gave me my dining-room set. I had a warm feeling for these players who helped me indirectly to get what I wanted. When my home was paid for, I set to work and bought the land around it.

Wolfie spent his winters on tour, his summers at home so he could watch his beloved Giants at the Polo Grounds. He never missed a game while they were in town. Being married to the all-time Giant fan, naturally I went with him to the games.

I loved those players—especially Christy Mathewson—and the Giants' fighting manager, Bugsy McGraw. But as I sat beside Wolfie in his box day after day, I began wondering what I was doing there. I should be planning something constructive for our future. No matter how much fun baseball was, I realized even in the early days that there would be no profit for me by daily attendance.

Our next-box neighbors were the great, hard-driving New York City editor of the old *Evening World*, Charles E. Chapin, and his wife. Mrs. Chapin had a voice with all the shy sweetness of a steel drill and never stopped talking.

Later on Mr. Chapin was convicted of murdering her, barely escaped being executed, and spent his last years in prison, taking care of the prison flower garden.

I wondered why he hadn't killed her sooner, and when his trial came up I wanted to testify in his defense. When I said so, Wolfie nearly killed me.

Once Hopper was asked by a New York newspaper to write his opinion of a World Series between New York and Philadelphia. He'd write furiously on the train between games. Toughest job he ever did. He could talk on any subject at the drop of a hint, but writing was torture. I never understood how he happened to write me so many love letters.

The only time he'd look up from his work on the train was to ask me how to spell a word. I was no good to him in that respect.

Years later I had a similar experience with Bernard M. Baruch. He was autographing a picture and said, "How do you spell gallant? One or two *l*s?"

"I think it's two," I replied.

"We can't think; we must be sure." With that he went searching for a dictionary and looked up the spelling before he continued with his autographing.

Wolfie, a masterful after-dinner speaker, worshiped fine phrases. When he heard a new word he wouldn't sleep until he had looked it up. The next day he would concoct a sentence to make use of the word, then it became a part of his amazing vocabulary. Wish I'd had sense enough to emulate his example.

While Wolfie followed the Giants, I saw less and less of him because I was too busy making pictures.

My agent was Edward Small, who later became a Hollywood producer. One of his pictures was *The Life of Valentino*, but unfortunately he made it long after Valentino had died. Eddie was supposed to get my jobs for me, but I nearly always landed my own.

When I was raised to one thousand dollars a week I went straight to Small from the director who'd given me the salary agreement. I told Eddie, and he stared at me and said, "You're kidding!" There he was, getting ten per cent, and he didn't believe me!

I went home and told Wolfie that at last my salary matched his—one thousand dollars a week.

"That's outrageous!" he shouted. "You're not worth it!" He had a point there, though only to myself would I admit it.

"They think I am," I said.

I thought Wolfie would be pleased; instead he was furious. Right there I began to fall out of love with him.

"You're no actress," he insisted.

"Who's the judge? You or the producers who sign my pay check? You never see pictures anyhow."

We had one heck of a row. His male ego rebelled at what had come of the little bit of clay from Altoona that he had picked up. Many times in Hollywood I've seen this bit of domestic difficulty repeated. Even men of the Stone Age insisted upon providing food for their women. But I noticed that Wolfie didn't say he was going to move out of our home —the one I'd bought and paid for.

I had seen him as mad as that only once before, when I told him he'd added a minute and a half to the five-minute recitation of *Casey at the Bat*. I'd heard that piece a thousand times and loved it. He knew it so well he didn't have to think about it while he did it.

He'd recite it and at the same time plan supper after the show. If he happened to be in Boston he'd decide on clam broth, broiled scrod, potatoes au gratin, maybe a cut of mince pie. If he was in Seattle it would be pheasant or wild duck and saffron rice. In time this gastronomical woolgathering slowed *Casey* down. It irked me; I liked things to be done snap, snap, snap! However, since he wouldn't believe me, I invited some intimate friends in, served Wolfie and them a delicious dinner, then got him to do *Casey*, to prove it to himself.

With a grunt he agreed to let us hold a stop watch on him. "All right, stop me where you think I've slowed up. Let's go!"

Then he began: " 'The outlook wasn't brilliant for the Mudville nine that day . . .' "

When he had recited a few more lines I said, "Stop!"

"Okay."

As he continued on, I stopped him four times. When he tried to start again, he blew higher than a kite, couldn't remember the next line. The next day he couldn't remember any of them.

He didn't have *Casey* written down, so he had to send to the sports editor of the Boston *Traveler* for a copy. He had to learn the thing over again from scratch.

He didn't speak to me for a week. But *Casey*—and his audiences—were saved.

De Wolf Hopper was a man's man at heart. He never should have been married once, let alone six times. I didn't

really have a husband; I had legal permission to live with a star.

He'd remain at the Lambs Club till daybreak, come home, wake me up, tell me what a good time he'd had with the famous men he'd met, then go to bed. I used to say, "Why can't I meet some of those men?"

He'd stare at me in surprise and say, "But they wouldn't be interested in *you*."

I was expected to keep Bill quiet until Wolfie woke up at 1 P.M. He never wanted to be alone for a second. He'd have liked company even while he was bathing.

On his trips to and from New York he wouldn't be alone either. I kept finding lipstick, odd gloves, cigarettes, and hairpins—not mine—in his car. Then some friend would say to me, "You looked mighty pretty riding through the park with Wolfie yesterday." Riding through the park? I'd been working on a picture at Fort Lee, New Jersey.

I didn't have to consult a fortuneteller to know the time was drawing near when we'd have to separate. When my husband forgot he was a man's man and his eyes started wandering, I figured it was a good time to make the break.

I charged him with the evidence. "Ridiculous!" he said complacently. "I'm married to you."

A week end came when I was sure he had planned a rendezvous. "Take me along," I begged.

"Can't. You wouldn't fit in. Only men—we're going yachting."

By accident, I discovered his destination. Wading River, New Jersey. You might wade there, but I'll be jiggered if you could yacht.

I had friends living near there, so I took a train out. We located a certain cabin in the woods. The setting was romantic, all right. There was a full moon and the woods were bright and shining. I heard singing. The lady had a voice. I waited in the middle of the road. Soon Wolfie, his canary on his arm, strolled out. They ran smack into me. The canary ran, period.

"Sailing on pretty calm water tonight, aren't you, Wolfie?" I said.

It was the first time I had ever seen him at a loss for a comeback. He sputtered, "I can explain, dear——"

"Now I'll just bet you can—but tell it to the Kansas Navy," I said.

"You're not going to lock me out?"

Trailing my dignity, I departed. I took the train home, but Wolfie beat me; he had the car.

On the way home I prepared one of those speeches that actresses—and wives—get to do once in a lifetime. Unless, of course, they've had more than one husband. This was my first and only marriage, so I got only one try; but it was so corny you'd have thought I'd had more experience.

Wolfie sat comfortably in the chair I found him in when I arrived home. "I've given you my youth—the best years of my life——" I paced up and down in front of him. He watched me. I raved, I ranted. He heard, but I wouldn't want to take an oath that he listened.

"This is the end——"

He let me ride for several minutes. I paused—for dramatic effect. He raised his voice meekly and said. "I'm hungry. Anything in the house to eat?"

I catch on when I'm licked. I ascended the stairs like Lady Macbeth, locked myself in my bedroom, and telephoned BB in Buffalo to come at once. "Something dreadful has happened," I cried.

She thought something had happened to Bill—it never occurred to her that it might be Wolfie.

It never occurred to a lot of people, and that was what worried Wolfie. He was fearful that another divorce would upend his career.

Right after telephoning BB, I got a call from Sam Harris in New York. Would I be at his theater Monday morning to start rehearsals in William Anthony McGuire's play, *Six Cylinder Love?* Good lord, what a moment to get a part! Come to think of it, though, what better moment?

"Yes, I will, Sam."

I stayed in my room Sunday, and on Monday morning Wolfie drove me into town. He broke the silence with, "I'll be at the Lambs Club. When you're ready to go home, phone and I'll drive you out."

When we got back to Douglaston, BB was waiting. "What is this?" she said. "A joke?"

I told her what had happened. Wolfie swore the canary was just a casual friend.

"If that's true," I said hotly, "then keep her out of your company."

"Of course. Don't worry about it." But when his season opened she went along.

I put detectives on their trail. I was determined to get my divorce in New York, where the only grounds are infidelity. My detectives must have learned their business by mail order. Wolfie discovered that he was being watched and doubled

their fees to forget it. I got other detectives. Same thing. My operators sympathized with him.

Finally an intimate friend of Wolfie's came to my rescue, gave me the evidence, and I started divorce proceedings. Before the divorce went through, Wolfie went to several chums; Raymond Hitchcock among them, and persuaded them to plead for him. When Hitchy paid me a visit I burst out laughing.

"What's so funny?" he complained.

"You," I said. "If he'd searched the whole world, he couldn't have found anyone less likely to succeed." The reason Hitchy had held onto his faithful wife, Zabelle, all his life was because she loved him dearly.

My remark struck his funny bone and he shouted. "In all seriousness though, Hedda," he said, "take him back. Make it on probation if you have to. I'll tell you—stick him up in the attic—let him work his way downstairs. If he behaves for six months, take him back."

These comedians! They're never at a loss for a punch line.

Immediately after the divorce was final, Wolfie married again, for the sixth—and last—time.

After Ella, Ida, Edna, Nella, and Elda came Lillian, who didn't have to change her name, because hers was unlike any of the rest. She lives quietly in San Francisco. I'm sorry I have never met her. I'd like to thank her for being so nice to my son after his father's death. She sent him a signet ring with the Hopper crest, which was never off Wolfie's finger. It's Bill's proudest possession.

9

The first time my son Bill saw me on the stage was in *Six Cylinder Love*. He came to a Saturday matinee, and I saw that he had a good seat, fifth row center. During the first act I glanced at him occasionally. He was having a fine time.

Later I was in my dressing room on the second floor when I heard a scream—not in the play. I tore downstairs, looked out from the wings, and saw a terrifying sight.

Our comedian Ralph Sipperly had to demonstrate a car on stage to June Walker and Ernest Truex. Ralph had never learned to drive. He started the car, not knowing that someone had left it in gear. The car shot out over the orchestra,

skimmed the front row, and the fore wheels landed on the chest of a woman in the second row.

There was panic in the audience—even more inside my heart as I craned my neck to see if Bill was all right. I couldn't tell. Breaking the ironclad rule of the theater, I tore open the fire door to the side aisle and rushed into the audience. I caught sight of Bill—he was okay—then I tried to help lift the car off the woman's chest.

She just sat there, stunned but apparently unhurt, though the fender was against her body. The musicians and some college boys in the front row ducked into the orchestra pit. The women had time to do likewise, but must have been hypnotized, unable to move. In fact, we had difficulty getting her to leave her seat. We took her back to June's dressing room and sent for a doctor, while men in the audience heaved the car back onto the stage. The curtain was rung down, and the manager went out front to explain that there would be a five-minute delay, then the play would continue.

The wait was to learn the doctor's verdict about the woman's injuries. After examining her, he said: "I can't find anything wrong, but you'd better let me take you home in my car."

"No. Put me in a taxi. I'm all right."

The taxi driver was instructed to get her address and bring it back to the theater manager. He drove her to a drugstore on upper Broadway and waited while she went in. When she didn't come out, he went after her. She had left through a back door and was never heard from again. That's one mystery I never snooped to solve.

The curtain was raised, and we picked up the play where we left off. The next line was funny—and the audience laughed. The incident could have shut down the play. I stayed with it ten months.

Soon after *Six Cylinder Love* opened, it seemed to me that my second-act costume needed pepping up. My part wasn't big, so I relied on my appearance. I bustled off to Mercedes, my favorite hatter. "Leave it to me," she said. "Let's change your hat. What color do you respond to?"

"My costume is chartreuse. I think a red hat would set it off, don't you?"

She made me the brightest red hat you ever saw, trimmed with big fat camellias. A perfect knockout!

However, I had to get the star's permission before wearing it. June Walker, a darling, was sometimes touchy. I modeled the hat for her. "How do you like it?" I asked.

"Hedda, it's beautiful."

"Don't you think it will be lovely in the second act?"

"Just grand."

"Then you don't mind if I change hats?"

"Not in the least," she said.

I wore it for three performances. Several times I noticed June eying me, but thought nothing of it.

After I wore it the third time the company manager came to me. "You'll have to go back to your old hat, Miss Hopper. Miss Walker's friends tell her that from the front you can't see anything on stage but that red hat."

"But I got her consent before I changed."

"Can't help it. Take it up with Sam Harris then."

I told Sam the story. "You keep right on wearing it," he said.

June threatened to leave the play. "Go ahead," Sam told her. "We've got a good understudy. If you hadn't given your consent, it would be a different matter. Having given it, Miss Hopper wears the hat."

Each year a successful Broadway play is singled out to be given as a free matinee for the blind. The actors consider it a privilege. *Six Cylinder Love* was chosen, but the Musicians' Union wouldn't allow the orchestra to play without pay.

Fritz Kreisler heard of it, called the box office and asked permission to play for the performance, but insisted on no publicity. He was booked for a concert in New Haven that night, but he arranged to get a train after our matinee.

I stood in the wings while he played, and looked into the faces of those sightless people. In heaven—if I ever make it —I don't expect to see happier expressions, which said more clearly than any words that in the presence of this great man, who was playing for them only, they were in the presence of a celestial being.

There was much excitement among members of the cast the night Charles Ray and his wife, Clara, came to watch our performance. During one of our scenes June Walker noticed the Rays smiling at me and, when we came off stage, said, "Do you know them?"

"Very well."

"Do you suppose they'll come back after the performance?"

"It wouldn't surprise me. Want to meet them?"

"I'm dying to," she said,

Following the play, we held a reception for the Rays on the stage. At that time Charles Ray was one of the greatest stars of filmdom. He told me that night that before leaving Hollywood he had transferred fifty thousand dollars from a

Los Angeles bank to one in New York to take care of their expenses.

The Rays returned to New York some years later. By that time Charlie had lost his place in motion pictures and his beautiful home in Beverly Hills. He and his wife went to live in one room in a West Side hotel.

Charlie lost his money after a friend persuaded him that he was the perfect choice for *The Courtship of Miles Standish*. Being an actor and unwise in business, he backed the film with his own money. In its day, *The Courtship of Miles Standish* was as great a failure as Clark Gable's *Parnell*.

Charlie has been dead these many years, but Clara Ray has her own dress shop on the Sunset Strip and still looks a fashion plate.

I won't forget the night she arrived at my home for a housewarming party wearing a new French creation of beautiful brocade. Soon afterward another friend, Em Smith, who had only money, came in in the same dress.

Billy Haines, in a shout that could be heard all over the place, said, "My God, the balance of the bolt!"

While still in the play I was engaged to make *Sherlock Holmes* with Jack Barrymore, Carol Dempster, and Bill Powell. This was Powell's first screen experience, and even he admits that, by all standards of acting, it should have been his last.

You may imagine my excitement over making a picture with the great Jack Barrymore, whom I had adored from afar. I'd seen every play he'd been in. I thrilled to *Redemption* and saw *The Jest* six times. I knew him off stage when he lived at the Algonquin periodically while we were there. When he was on stage in *The Jest* he was from another world. His love scenes were superb. I always had a seat down front so I wouldn't miss a thing—and so Jack wouldn't miss me. Up there on the stage, that wasn't an actress in his arms—it was Hedda Hopper, going through every thrill of his embrace.

Jack knew I had a schoolgirl crush on him, and the sixth time he saw me out front he decided to have a little fun. He was bored with the play anyway, so when he came to the love scene he kidded it, the leading lady, the whole thing.

To me, sacrilege! I never saw *The Jest* again. The spell was broken.

There were other times when Jack respected my feelings for his plays and his performances. I met him one day when he was playing Peter Ibbetson. "Have you seen it?" he asked.

"Not yet."

"All right. I'll send around your tickets. You must see it at a certain angle for the lighting. I know just where you should sit."

I still treasure his note which came with the tickets.

In *Sherlock Holmes* I had no love scenes with Jack, but I was thrilled to the marrow just being in the same picture with him. I played a heavy. After he had treated me brutally in a scene, he'd say, "I'm sorry, Hedda." I'm able to understand those fans who worship stars of today. To the day he died I was that way over Jack Barrymore.

During the making of *Sherlock Holmes* we became acquainted with the battle of the profiles. One side of Barrymore's face was photogenically perfect. When Carol Dempster discovered that, she decided *her* perfect profile was the same side. In close-ups it didn't matter; but in a two-shot, one profile had to give way to the other.

One whole day was devoted to this problem. Need you ask who won? Barrymore, naturally.

Barrymore, Powell, and I used to eat our lunch at a little delicatessen on Forty-fourth Street and Ninth Avenue. Among others who ate there was Norma Shearer. The first time I met her she was a model for Tecla pearls and at the same time playing with Reginald Denny in his picture *The Leatherpushers.* That was Norma's first screen experience. After that she got a contract with Louis B. Mayer and beat me to Hollywood by three months. I don't know how she met him or how she got her contract. I know how I got mine.

Six Cylinder Love had closed when I heard that L. B. Mayer was on one of his regular trips to New York. I made a date to see him.

"I shouldn't even talk to you," was his greeting.

"Why not?" I asked.

"I've wired you three picture offers—you turned me down."

"And you know why. How could I leave a home, a husband, and a son?"

"Well, you haven't got a husband now."

"True. So now I can come to Hollywood."

"Oh, but now you're too rich for my blood. I can't afford your thousand dollars a week."

"All right. Can you afford to pay my expenses?"

"What are they?"

I picked up pad and pencil, figured out what I had to have in order to live, keep up Wolfie's insurance and Bill's school-

ing, and shoved the figures under his nose. I didn't know it then, but that's when I needed a business manager to plug up the hole in my head.

Mayer said, "You wouldn't come for that!"

"Try me," I added.

"You're on." He pressed a button on his desk, a door opened, and he said, "Get my lawyer in here right away. I need a contract drawn up before this idiot changes her mind."

It seems I had agreed to go to Hollywood for two hundred and fifty dollars a week.

10

Before I crossed the continent for a year's stay in California, Zabelle Hitchcock, who was going to Paris with her cousin to buy French models for his wholesale dress business, asked me to accompany her abroad. Never having seen the Old World, I was easily persuaded.

Bill was well taken care of during my absence and enjoyed himself thoroughly. On my trip to Banff, Canada, I had met an Irish guide named Tabby, who was full of original stories. He'd spin yarns around the great fire in the hotel lobby every night. Tabby had lived in the Northwest for twenty years. When I heard him say, "The winters up here are getting harder to bear; I don't think my health will let me take another one," it gave me an idea.

"How about coming to Long Island to take care of my son?" I asked.

"I don't know a thing about boys," he said, "but if you want to take a chance on me I'll come."

He came, complete with saddle and ten-gallon hat. He was a character, but he did have a taming influence on Bill, who was a very determined young man.

The first time he went to pick up Bill after school, my son declared his independence, saying, "I don't want to go home, and you can't make me."

Tabby looked down at this rebel and thought to himself: "What do I do now?" At that moment Bill bolted. Tabby ran after him, got him round the waist, lifted him in his arms, and kept on walking. This was too much for Bill's companions, who started to yell: "Bill Hopper's got a keeper; Bill Hopper's got a kee-per!"

After half a block, Bill said quietly, "If you'll put me down now, I'll walk."

That evening, after Bill had gone to bed, Tabby and I discussed my son. "You know," said Tabby, "I told you I didn't know much about boys, but I know an awful lot about horses. A fine race horse never has to be touched with a whip; others sometimes have to be broken to the bit. Do you mind if I buy a whip?"

"No, go ahead."

However, Tabby never had occasion to use the whip. When he had the situation well in hand, I sailed for Europe with Zabelle; but when spring came and the snows were thawing in Banff, Canada, Tabby heard the call of the wild. It was all I could do to keep my young colt from going with him.

Paris was every girl's dream come true, and to me it is still the most beautiful city in the world.

I wanted to see London too. Zabelle had been there, so I crossed the English Channel alone, after wiring the Savoy Hotel for a reservation.

On the crossing I was the only person not seasick; I was too excited to waste my time.

I registered at the hotel, asked the rate, and after reaching my room figured out my pounds sterling in American dollars and discovered I was paying twenty dollars a day without meals. Pretty high, I thought, for a room and bath; but I ordered dinner in my room and started to telephone friends, unaware that everyone clears out of London for week ends. I reached exactly no one.

Consequently, I ate my dinner in lonely splendor. About ten o'clock the phone rang and a voice said, "Miss Hopper?"

"Yes."

"This is Jack Simmons. I met you in New York some time ago." The accent was British; I didn't know the name and was certain I'd never met him. He asked permission to come to my room and pay his respects.

I said coldly, "Young man, I don't know your name. I'm sure I've never met you. I'm not receiving. Good night!"

I thought no more about it till the following morning when I asked the clerk if he had a less expensive room.

"You don't like the one you have?" he asked.

"The room, yes. The price, no."

"Would you be happy in it at eight dollars a day?" he asked.

"Extremely." Then I realized that the call from Mr. Simmons was the hotel's way of checking on a lady traveling

alone. Smart people, the English, and I've never underrated their intelligence.

Many earth-shattering events took place in 1923: Adolf Hitler staged his famous Beer Hall Putsch in Munich; Red Grange played his first college football game for Illinois; Henry Luce started *Time* magazine; Jack Dempsey knocked out Luis Angel Firpo in the second round—and Tallulah Bankhead captured London singlehanded.

Charles Cochran, the British theatrical producer, invited me to the opening of *The Dancers*, which marked Tallulah's first London appearance. The way it came about makes quite a story.

Ira Hill, famous New York photographer, kept a picture of Talu in his Fifth Avenue showcase. When Cochran noticed it he stood stock-still for a full minute. Tallulah was wearing an off-shoulder black velvet gown with real lace around the top.

Next day Cochran lunched with Frank Case at the Algonquin and commented on the remarkable picture he'd seen in Hill's case. Did Frank know the girl? Was she an actress?

Looking across the dining room, Case spotted Talu and said to Cochran, "Like to meet her?"

"I say, old boy, I'd enjoy nothing more."

Frank called, "Tallulah, come here a minute." Over she sped. "May I present you to Mr. Charles Cochran," Case said.

No need to tell Talu who he was; she knew.

Cochran commented on the beautiful picture and asked what experience she'd had in the theater. She'd been in several plays, none lasted very long. Cochran said, "If you ever get to England, come to me; I'll give you a job."

"Remember," she cried, "I have a witness. You promised. You won't back out?"

Cochran said gallantly, "Nor will I forget."

Talu was at a turning point. Her idol Jack Barrymore was newly married. She was out of cash. "I've got to get to London," she thought, "but on what?"

She knew some people who weren't politicians or actors. One, a banker, was giving a stag party at the old Waldorf. He was well aware of talents possessed by Tallulah. Among other things, she was athletic; she could turn cartwheels as well as Elsie Janis or Charlotte Greenwood.

The banker turned up at the psychological moment, saying, "Talu, if you come to the hotel and turn cartwheels

all around the table for my guests, I'll give you anything you name."

"Anything?" she asked craftily.

"Anything."

She showed up and turned cartwheels so fast it made the guests' heads swim.

When she finished she planked herself in front of her host. "You promised. Now I want a boat ticket to London."

"Hey——"

"You promised!"

He pulled out his checkbook, and a few days later Talu was off on her first great adventure.

In her usual headlong way, she neglected to set up proper arrangements. She had never heard of such a thing as a labor permit. When she arrived at Southampton she was detained.

"You can't do this to me!" yelled the Bankhead. "I'm an American actress under contract to Charles Cochran. You must let me in immediately, you silly men."

"Might we see the contract?" they said politely.

"Don't waste time—I haven't got one. My contract is verbal—a gentlemen's agreement. Phone Mr. Cochran in London. He'll tell you. Brother, will he tell you! He'll make you apologize to me!"

Cochran was a good sport. She was released into his custody, and the immigration people apologized. They never had met a wildcat in human form before, and were, to put it conservatively, bowled over.

Talu was convoyed to London, and from that first day she never ceased to startle the natives. Her caprices, her fund of uncensored stories (many of them learned from her father, famous as the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and elaborated on by her to render them even more spicy) were a sensation. She raced through London like a Texas twister. Never had the English beheld such vitality.

Soon after Talu's arrival Cochran's top star, Sir Gerald Du Maurier, was scheduled to commence rehearsals of a new play *The Dancers* which needed an American girl. Cochran made up his mind to take a chance.

"Let's see what you can do with it," he said to Talu.

On opening night Tallulah got a tremendous hand; she was a hit; she was in. In those days a London success automatically meant kudos everywhere.

Du Maurier was a past master of subtle wit. The English girl in the play was excellent. Tallulah played a smallish

part through three acts. But in the epilogue Talu raised the play, built on a skimpy foundation, from the subcellar and literally made it her own. Her performance, in fact, saved the play.

After the final curtain call Mrs. Cochran took me backstage and upstairs to Talu's dressing room. We found her face down amid the grease paint and powder on her dressing table, sobbing her heart out.

"Are you crazy?" I greeted her. "You should be jumping for joy. You gave the most brilliant imitation of Ethel Barrymore I've ever seen——"

Her head came up with a jerk. She stuttered, "D'you think anyone recognized it?"

"Of course not. They don't know Ethel well enough over here."

As she dried her tears Mrs. Cochran said, "Get dressed now and come down. You must meet the press and many other people." Mrs. Cochran and I went on ahead.

On the stage were Du Maurier, his English leading lady, and two thirds of the audience, as well as British critics and producers. Champagne and sandwiches were being handed out. I met the leading stars and those who came to pay respects to Mrs. Cochran. Offhand one producer offered me a part in his new play if I'd remain over.

I've often wondered if I wouldn't have spared myself—and Hollywood—many heartaches if I'd signed that contract and stayed in London.

Finally Tallulah came down. She curtsied to Du Maurier and he introduced her around as "my little American leading lady." Then, instead of staying to meet the proper people, Talu gave him five minutes of her time and was off with a rabble of amusing but unstable companions she'd picked up at random during rehearsals.

The British public loved her escapades, humanly enough preferring cheerful sinners to painted saints. For years she was their darling. She was their darling long before she made that raucous "dahhh-hling" her catch line.

Tallulah was shrewd enough to do some worth-while things along with the fiddle-de-do-dad. After Augustus John, the famous British painter, had finished Du Maurier's portrait, he asked Tallulah to sit for him. Du Maurier's portrait was offered to his daughter, the author of *Rebecca,* but Tallulah was the one who eventually bought it. She remembered how good he was to her at a time when she was too harum-scarum to appreciate it. Both portraits now hang in the bedroom of her Bedford Hills home.

One day I went to one of Tallulah's sittings. For John she sat as still as the little girl with the curl in the middle of her forehead. Her hands folded demurely on her lap, she held the pose with a look of angelic serenity. I couldn't help remarking, "Talu, if you could only be like that in real life . . ."

The artist rumbled, "Would you ask the sun and the moon to stand still? This is Tallulah Bankhead!"

The largest single collection of Augustus John paintings is owned by the Cazalet family in London. The blue drawing room in Peter Cazalet's country home was designed around a blue necktie in one of John's portraits. The Cazalets didn't know who the subject of the painting was until I told them. It was Tom Mix; they'd never heard of him.

Although the huge, shaggy artist receives big prices for his paintings, he shook his leonine head in wonder when he learned that Mix made seventeen thousand dollars a week for riding a horse in front of a camera; and Mix thought so little of John that he never offered to buy the painting, one of John's best.

Elizabeth Taylor's family have reason to remember the Cazalets well. Elizabeth was born in a tiny cottage (Little Swallows) on her godfather Victor Cazalet's English estate, Great Swifts.

Victor Cazalet made a trip to New York during the early part of World War II. He was devoted to Elizabeth and wanted to see her, but he was in New York and she in California.

Although Victor had thousands of English pounds, he had no American dollars; and though he was the house guest of the wealthy Mrs. Ogden Reid, owner of the New York *Tribune,* he telephoned me to ask if I could arrange a lecture for him in Los Angeles which would pay him enough money to make the trip West. I was able to book him into the Ebell Theatre here. He stayed with the Taylor family one week, and that was the last time he ever saw his beautiful godchild.

Victor was looking forward eagerly to seeing her on the screen in *National Velvet,* but never lived to have that pleasure. He lost his life during the war while flying with Igor Sikorsky. The Nazis shot them down, thinking the plane was carrying the great Winston Churchill.

Coming home on the *Ile de France* after that first trip to Europe, I learned that a benefit was always given for survivors of sailors lost in service. Not being able to sing or

dance, I decided to wear the one beautiful gown I'd bought in Paris, a Jenny model made of cloth of silver. In fact, that was the gown that attracted the eye of the London producer who had offered me a part in his play.

When it was my turn to perform, the applause was healthy. I realized it was aimed at what Neysa McMein would call *my design.* As I waited for the applause to subside, some stories I'd learned from Wolfie popped into my feeble brain. Those yarns spilled out of me like water over the bridal falls. I realized for the first time that as long as Wolfie's stories held out, I could hold my own in a well-assorted group of experienced entertainers.

Wolfie's stories are still being told.

11

Louis Mayer rented space for his studio at the Selig Zoo in Los Angeles. The zoo was the stronghold of wild animals trained for pictures. All day long, while the actors were silent on the movie stages, the animals roared their disapproval in their cages.

Norma Shearer and I worked until midnight one night, then started together for our dressing rooms. It was dark and seemed very quiet.

Sitting in the doorway of my room was a lion. I let out a screech you could have heard in Pomona and—Norma at my heels—ran back toward the set. I found a man there and tried to tell him about it, but my teeth were chattering so I could hardly get out the words.

He was the night watchman. He put his head back and gave me a big laugh. "He wouldn't bite you, missy."

"He's a lion, isn't he? Lions bite, don't they?"

"He ain't got no teeth to bite with, missy."

"He's got claws, though."

"They're clipped. Don't go bein' afraid, ladies. At night when all the picture people are gone and there's nothing for the animals to be scared of, we give them the run of the place—they'd have the run of it all the time if you folks wasn't clutterin' it up."

Louis B. chose the Selig Zoo because it was the cheapest place in town. That lion gave him the idea of his Leo trademark. In those days Mr. Mayer drove around in a second-hand Ford. One day I asked him why he didn't have a better

car. He took me over to a window in his office and pointed down at a long shed. "See those cars down there?" he said. "Pretty, aren't they?"

They sure were. I wished I had one.

"Yes, and I've seen too many of them, belonging to directors and stars, taken out of there by the finance company. I'm going to use my Ford until I can afford to buy three Cadillacs—for cash."

Louis's assistant was the young, enterprising Irving Thalberg, who had started as an office boy at Universal for old Papa Carl Laemmle.

Irving Thalberg was the only genius, except D. W. Griffith and Walt Disney, I ever met in the motion-picture industry. Louis was always the clever politician—still is—but Irving was the little creative giant. He could carry ten productions on his back at the same time and never mix the plots or the scenes in his brain.

After taking a cut of seven hundred and fifty dollars a week to come to Hollywood, I was thrown a curve on my first picture. I was to have played the leading part in a film being directed by Reginald Barker, whom I'd met.

At our first meeting I felt a chill blow off some icy mountaintop of his mind, but I didn't expect it to bring an avalanche down on my head.

"I can't photograph this woman!" Barker announced suddenly.

Producers shuddered at the thought of going against a director's judgment. In those days directors were almost more important than producers. If a film turned out bad, the director could gloat—and don't think he wouldn't!—"Well, I told you so!"

So Mr. Mayer hired Winifred Bryson in my place. Subsequently she married the star of the picture, Warner Baxter.

The news that Reginald Barker couldn't photograph this New York actress ran around like wildfire. It all but ruined my Hollywood picture career before it even got going. I'd banked heavily on security in Hollywood, and the rug was pulled out from under me.

That is, until John Stahl, Mr. Mayer's ace director, heard about it. John said, "That's nonsense! When I make my next picture I'll put her in it." He kept his word. It was the first film I made with Norma Shearer.

Norma met Irving Thalberg at the Selig Zoo. Many stars had no time for Irving. Let it be said that he had little time for girls. He hadn't yet struck it rich, and some actresses never could see beyond their own noses. But, if you only

could see it, Irving was climbing up the golden ladder and Norma had her foot on the first rung of success.

Irving and Mayer moved out of the zoo and across town to the present location of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer studios. That was more than a quarter of a century ago. Irving's dead now, and Louis is out of the studio.

Norma married Thalberg and he made her number-one star at Metro. Naturally Norma got first whack at everything—stories, writers, directors, leading men. She got two diamond bracelets as wedding gifts, one from William Randolph Hearst, the other from Marion Davies, one of her bridesmaids.

When Norma returned from her honeymoon she regaled us with the story of a post-wedding battle on the train. It began when she tried to unclasp the bracelets. Cartier clasps have hidden locks and, like handcuffs, unless you're familiar with them, they're not easily undone.

For three quarters of an hour Norma and Irving struggled over those clasps. Nothing doing. Finally Irving gave up in exasperation. "What the hell! Wear 'em to bed—you don't think Mr. Hearst's diamonds tarnish, do you?"

When their first child was born Irving's parents were still living with them. His mother ran the household. The birth of Irving Jr. ushered in a new era in Hollywood customs. Hitherto the picture companies were terrified by the idea of a star having a child—her glamour wouldn't stand it; her public would turn against her; having babies was for ordinary mortals, not for stars.

Norma cracked that tradition. The public had never really swallowed it anyway; the producers only imagined it. Anyhow, after her babies came, Norma was more popular than ever. Maternity didn't shade her love scenes on screen. Sonnets of love poured into her shell-like ears from the lips of the world's most romantic lovers—Leslie Howard, Basil Rathbone, Clark Gable, Robert Montgomery, Robert Taylor —she had 'em all on the screen. And the public ate her up.

Marie Antoinette capped anything she ever did. Even Metro felt nervous of overreaching themselves with her. They were fearful that the picture couldn't possible be as great as the publicity boys said it was. They were so right.

I've seen premières in my time, but that *Marie Antoinette* première at the Carthay Circle Theatre darn near blinded the citizens. The Trocadero shindig later was no lawn party either.

The studio already had spent so much, they decided to throw in what was left of the bank roll. American Beauty

roses by the hundreds of dozens were tied in bunches to each post at the theater entrance. Those left over were strewn with careless grace on the grass. A stage was built outside; a string orchestra played. Stars trod the red carpet and gushed and gabbled into the mike: "Hello, everybody, I know this is going to be the most wonderful picture ever made. Wish you were here . . . blah, blah, blah."

At the psychological moment Louis B. Mayer led Norma up in the flesh. Marie Antoinette was wearing cloth of gold from head to toe. She looked more like Joan of Arc going into battle.

After the picture everyone adjourned to the party. It was a curious thing that all eyes seemed to be on a table for two occupied by Clark Gable and Carole Lombard. Not having paid for the picture, or the première, or the supper, they were just having fun, and the look of them brought smiles to all the sad faces—even Mayer's.

When Norma arrived at the Troc she went straight to the powder room, where her maid was waiting. That's the first and only time I ever saw a hostess change dresses in mid-party. She came out of the powder room in a handmade black-sequined sheath so tight she had to watch not only her step but her breathing.

Norma really had a yen for herself in those costumes Adrian designed for *Marie Antoinette*. She made quite a picture in that towering white wig and the costume all silver and gold and sparkle. So when she was invited by Marion Davies to one of Mr. Hearst's famous birthday parties at Marion's Santa Monica home, she decided to do something special. Marion's invitations read: American History Party.

Norma made American history all right. Gathering together her friends—the Basil Rathbones, Hedy Lamarr, Reggie Gardiner, and the Charles Boyers—she had them all fitted to costumes from the Marie Antoinette picture. New wigs were made for them; even seats taken out of their cars so their elaborate getups wouldn't be crushed on the drive to Santa Monica.

The party started at 8 P.M. Marie Antoinette arrived at the American history affair at midnight.

There was a gasp of astonishment that even the Pacific mermaids heard, if it wasn't past their bedtime.

Marion Davies was dressed as a Revolutionary War belle. Dorothy Di Frasso was Pocahontas, with a feather up her back. Cissy Patterson had flown out for the event from Washington.

Marion was fit to be tied. So was W.R. When I saw the

entrance of the French court, in pure reflex I exclaimed, "Well, I'll be good-goddamned!" Norma heard me and glared.

The wind was taken out of all the silken sails when an order was given that no photographs of the royal ensemble were to be taken. Many of the guests put in their two cents' worth, acting as if the Frenchies were The People Who Weren't There.

You see, what Norma didn't stop to think about was that not too many years earlier W.R. had been barred from France. On the subject of anything French his feelings were still, shall we say, somewhat raw.

Norma seemed to have a special knack in those days for getting under the skin of her pals and busting up their parties. She did a man-sized job on Carole Lombard.

Carole was chairman of our last Mayfair Ball, and you could trust her to think up something original. She surprised us by announcing we would go dignified and have a White Ball.

The stars worked at fever pitch ordering their white gowns. I had almost more fun scheming to outshine my rivals than attending the party.

The ball was held in the old Victor Hugo Restaurant in Beverly Hills; it was the perfect setting for all those beautiful white dresses. At the height of the gaiety, Norma Shearer made her usual late dazzling entrance. It was too dazzling. Norma had on a bright red gown. Carole, who'd played jokes on others all her life, couldn't take this one. She ran for the nearest exit; Clark Gable ran after her. They both saw red at the same moment.

That was the only time I ever saw Carole's perpetual good humor shaken. She saw the funny side of life always and laughed more at herself than at the other fellow.

12

Until I could get settled, I had left Bill in a boarding school back East. I went to live at the Hollywood Hotel and soon knew that, with the prospect of long hours at hard work, I couldn't give my son the personal attention and companionship a boy should have. Finally, however, I was able to make a plan for him that I thought was a good one. He would go to the Black-Foxe Military School, right in Los Angeles, near enough for me to see him often, yet surrounded

by an atmosphere of orderliness and good training. A friend of mine, Peg LaVino, brought him out for me and I entered him in school.

The Hollywood Hotel was an old rattrap of a building at the corner of Hollywood Boulevard and Highland Avenue, but it was the best we had in the early twenties. On the land where the swank Bel Air Hotel stands today was a stable. The Beverly Hills Hotel was just where it is now, but it was no better than the Hollywood and miles from the heart of our activities, which were centered around Hollywood and Vine.

Among the famous people who lived at the old Hollywood Hotel was Elinor Glyn—the sister of Lady Duff-Gordon—fairly well known in her own right after she wrote *Three Weeks* and sold it to the movies. But Elinor became famous when she named Clara Bow the "It" girl. Also, important New York actors Bert Lytell and Tully Marshall lived at the Hollywood, as well as Laura Hope Crews, Bessie Love, and Rupert Hughes.

The Thursday night dances at the hotel were almost as famous as those at the old Sixty Club in New York. People came from all over town to watch the actors do their stuff.

The hotel was owned by a maiden lady named Hershey, a member of the chocolate family. She ran things in a haphazard manner, and it was years before she caught onto the fact that actors sometimes will enter actresses' bedrooms if they aren't watched and if the bedrooms happen to be on the ground floor, with low window sills.

This horrified the old girl and she took measures nothing less than drastic, worthy of a Catherine de' Medici. She bought a lot of huge cactus plants and planted them under every window on the ground floor. She made regular inspections to make sure no passionate actor dug them up.

The townspeople didn't think very highly of actors as a class. In a way I hardly blamed them. When a picture company secured the use of a private home as a location, it was left in such a mess that you'd have thought elephants had used it for a playground. The picture companies never offered to pay for damage or repairs. This was before the era of paying two thousands dollars a day for the use of a location, with strict contract clauses about things being left in as good condition as they were found. Finally local homeowners wouldn't let picture companies anywhere near them. In this period a gulf developed between film society and Los Angeles society as defined as the Red Sea created by Cecil DeMille.

No actor or actress was allowed to set foot in the exclusive Bel Air section, for instance. And as for their owning a plot of land there, the thought was anathema. Los Angeles was growing toward the ocean, and many citizens were building homes out that way. I visited one old friend and heard a description of a sweet and charming girl who had rented the estate next to hers.

"What is her name?" I asked.

"Mary Duncan," said my hostess.

"The actress Mary Duncan?"

"Gracious, no, she couldn't be an actress!"

"Now hold everything! Why couldn't she be an actress? I'm one."

"Oh, but you're—well, you're different."

All the same, the girl living next door was the Mary Duncan who played in *The Shanghai Gesture* on Broadway. Winnie Sheehan saw her, brought her West, and was making her a picture star. Many years later she was to penetrate the Social Register as Mrs. Laddie Sanford. But first, a member of the acting profession, she made her way into Bel Air—and stayed there.

Bel Air could easily have gone bankrupt after the 1929 crash. So the gates were opened and such of the acting profession as had the price of a plot of land paid their money and built there.

I bought my first car while I lived at the Hollywood Hotel. Wolfie had never allowed me to drive. Although he couldn't even pull down a window shade without jerking it off its roller, he said I was a congenital idiot where machinery was concerned. So I hired a chauffeur for one month. In Hollywood it was either drive or walk. My nether extremities rebelled at the distance between hotel and studios. I couldn't afford a chauffeur permanently, so he was hired to teach me as quickly as possible how to drive. I would take a lesson for an hour and then shake for three hours.

I'd been practicing for several weeks when I spied Mrs. Jesse Lasky ahead of me in her limousine. She turned around, saw me, and waved. I waved back and—smack! Right into her rear end! Bessie didn't mind, bless her. She could have bought ten limousines.

I kept the chauffeur on for an extra month. At the end of that time I could drive up and down telegraph poles as well as the next one. Still can. Hell-on-the-Highway Hopper, they call me.

After I had made several pictures, Reginald Barker—the

same who said he couldn't photograph me—asked to have me in his next. Now it was my turn to refuse.

Irving Thalberg sent for me. "What's all this about?" he asked.

When I told him, he said, "I don't blame you. I would refuse too. Just the same, it'll have to mean your contract." Rules were rules, policies were policies.

Right off the bat I got a picture on my own, at twice the salary the studio had been paying me. That picture developed into three for me.

And, like the Elda Furry whose mother taught her honesty and integrity back in Altoona, Pennsylvania, I sent the extra two hundred and fifty dollars I got back to Louis B. Mayer. Maybe I was a fool, but darned if Louis didn't pocket it!

Making that picture gave me my only trip to Florida. I put up at the Flamingo Hotel at the cost of nineteen dollars a day. It was the swankest place there at the time, but when you're making pictures on location your expenses are paid.

What a time I had! When I wasn't working, I went to parties, attended yacht races, tennis and swimming meets, and the polo matches.

The year before I visited Miami, Julius Fleischmann, head man of the yeast family, lost his wife Dolly to Jay O'Brien. Julius loved her so much that when he agreed to a divorce he settled six million dollars on her to make sure she'd continue to have the luxuries she was accustomed to as Mrs. Fleischmann.

I'd always stop at his yacht after I finished my day's work. To Julius I was the mother type, and he poured his heart out to me. Joining me on the beach, he'd point out the beauties and their companions from New York and all points west and north. That was a happy hunting ground for anyone who wasn't dull, homely, or past twenty-one. Oh, how I've wished I'd invested in a notebook instead of a one-piece bathing suit! The latter never did me a whit of good. I never had the shape for it.

Julius entertained continuously on his yacht, which was moored alongside a permanent dance floor on the dock. Fleischmann's hostess was his sister, Mrs. Holmes, and they were getting on each other's nerves.

One day he said to me, "Hedda, you've made a real place for yourself down here. How about coming aboard next year as my hostess?"

"That's impossible."

"I don't see why. People like you. I'll make it worth your while."

"I have a young son named Bill. Remember?"

He looked at me in amazement. "Good lord, Hedda, I never thought of that. Of course you can't."

That was one of the greatest compliments ever paid me. All I had to do to become his hostess was bring my son along with a governess. And *I* never thought of that.

Julius furnished polo ponies for all players who couldn't afford them. At the end of the season he was thrown from his own pony and suffered a broken collarbone and a slight concussion. His doctor told him he must never play again. But when he returned to Miami the following autumn from a European vacation, he went out to play. During the first game he fell from his horse and died on the field. Julius had reached the point where there was nothing more to live for. Without his Dolly, his many millions, sixty or seventy, didn't mean a thing.

Hedda Hopper? Well, she missed her chance for social security as *was* social security.

While I was in Florida I met Jane and Carl Fisher. He was the promoter who conceived and built the Indianapolis race track, where on Memorial Day race fans go berserk and some driver almost always ends his life.

The Bernard Gimbels invited me to their annual costume ball, and when it was rumored that a handsome prize would go to the best dressed, I made up my mind to get it. I sent to New York for a gown I'd seen Ethel Barrymore wear in a play. Having it shipped to Florida set me back a hundred dollars. What I'd heard about the prize was just that—a rumor. Only award I got was the splash made by the gown, which was a stunner.

Irving Berlin spent that winter of 1924 in Florida too. Alva Gimbel gave a dinner for twelve, and Irving taught us his latest songs. He was recovering from a romantic attachment and had written "Lazy" and "Blue Skies." This was years before he was to find perfect happiness with Ellin Mackay.

Can you picture eight men, Hearst editor Arthur Brisbane among them, and four women sitting on the floor around a piano learning lyrics from a little guy from New York's East Side?

The assemblage struck me as funny. Looking up at Alva, I said, "With the scarcity of attractive men, other hostesses would slit your throat if they knew you'd cornered eight of the most important men in the world." Even Arthur Brisbane laughed.

That night Bernie Gimbel remarked on the "intellectual"

formation of Brisbane's head. Arthur's forehead was not only unusually high, but convex, as though equipped with special room, fore and aft, for extra brains. "Now why isn't my head shaped like yours?" Bernie demanded.

"Because, son," Brisbane said calmly, "when your ancestors were swinging in the jungle by their tails, mine were off in the four corners of the globe in pursuit of culture." Right then and there I decided Brisbane was a member of the 7-H Club—Holy howling hell, how he hates himself!

When my first picture was finished I made another with Betty Compson, followed by one with Lois Wilson.

From Florida I went to New York to see the new plays. The year 1924 was a vintage year: *Beggar on Horseback*, with Roland Young and Osgood Perkins; Emily Stevens in *Fata Morgana;* Richard Bennett, Pauline Lord, and Glenn Anders were doing *They Knew What They Wanted;* and there was the never-to-be-forgotten *Outward Bound*, with Leslie Howard, Beryl Mercer, Margalo Gillmore, and an interesting newcomer named Alfred Lunt.

I was on hand, too, for the New York première of Doug Fairbanks' *Thief of Bagdad*. For blocks on either side of the theater, Forty-second Street was mobbed with people crazy to see Doug and Mary. The stars wanted everyone seated before making their entrance. Half a block from the theater, Doug heard feminine screams. Leaning forward, he heard: "Rudy—Rudy—— Oh, Rudy—you're wonderful—we love you, Rudy—Ruuuu-deeee!"

Yes, the great lover, Rudolph Valentino, was making his entrance, and Doug knew in a split second he couldn't compete, that he and Mary would be an anticlimax. "Drive around the block," he said to the chauffeur as he and Mary threw themselves in the bottom of the car.

Rudy swept romantically through the lobby into the theater, amid deafening cheers, and to the first box. The ladies had vapors; the men turned green with envy.

John McCormack, the Irish tenor, sat a couple of seats from me. Hearing him mutter, I began needling him by going on extravagantly about Valentino, who all this time was conducting himself with dignity like the gentleman he was. He bowed to the audience once, turned away firmly, giving his full attention to the stage, and waited quietly for the picture to begin.

McCormack was wild. Finally he lunged out of his seat, strode up the aisle, and left the theater. I laughed. At least

he was too full of wrath to see that it was Hedda Hopper who had baited him.

Doug and Mary? They came in through the stage door. The great lover had stolen their glory.

By this time I had received several picture offers from the Coast, so back I went to the mines. In short order I was in so many that I now forget their titles. I do remember *The Teaser* and *Dangerous Innocence* starring Laura La Plante. She later married our director, Bill Seiter.

Laura, a cute blond bundle of loveliness, decided to have one small fling in New York before her marriage to Seiter and asked me to go along. Always ready to tip my lid to the Big City, I accepted. Attractive men buzzed around Laura; important ones, too. Among others, Bobbie Lehman, of the banking family, was caught by her charms.

At this time Edgar Selwyn was preparing to produce Anita Loos's *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes.* Laura was pretty, fresh, and I thought just what the doctor ordered for Lorelei, so I introduced her to Selwyn. Although she'd never been on the stage, he offered her the star part, but she was wiser than he. She turned it down, returned to California, and married her Bill.

After a while they were divorced; then Laura married Irving Asher, a Metro producer. Not long ago she told me an incident involving Irving and his boss, Louis B. Mayer.

Irving was all set to undergo some minor, but painful, surgery, and went in to say good-by to his boss. "Where are you going?" asked Louis.

"To the hospital to have a little surgery."

"For what?" asked the great man.

He was told for what and given the name of the doctor.

Mayer pushed a button. "Oh no," he said to Irving, "the greatest surgeon for that ailment is Dr. So-and-So. I'll get him. He'll operate on you. He'll do it for me."

"But," the victim protested, "everything's set; the room's engaged, the operation scheduled."

"Tut, tut, my boy! You're one of my right hands. Gotta have the best for you." The call came through and Irving slid out of the office.

When he got home he told Laura in terror. "Well," she said, "we'll see about this." She telephoned Louis. "Now look here, L.B.," she began. "It's awfully kind of you and all that to suggest Irving's having your surgeon. But I want to tell you something. Irving's brains may belong to you, but his body belongs to me. And *our* doctor is going to cut

him open and check on what's wrong inside of him, and that's that!"

Irving is now a producer at Paramount.

13

During Laurette Taylor's two or three trips to Hollywood with her husband, Hartley Manners, to make pictures, she and I became real friends. Laurette didn't like women. She used to say to me darkly, "Don't trust 'em, Hedda; they'll double-cross you every time." Then she'd add with a laugh, "Don't trust me either. I'm Black Irish—we love you one minute and turn on you the next." But she never did.

Laurette had true appreciation for great acting. When her idol, Sarah Bernhardt, was making a farewell appearance at the Empire Theatre, Laurette was playing at the Globe. She invited the great one to be her guest at a special matinee and moved her entire production to the Empire to make it more convenient for Bernhardt.

The affair was strictly invitational; the house was packed with celebrities. Bernhardt swept in to occupy the second box, stage left. The view was better from there, but Madame Bernhardt didn't tolerate a second anything and demanded Box Number 1, already occupied by the aging and revered actress, Maggie Mitchell, who was brought in from the Actors' Home to see the performance. The switch was made, but I don't believe any player left the theater feeling the same respect for the French star as when they had entered.

I sat with Winchell Smith, author of *Turn to the Right* and many other successes. Laurette's performance was a rare one. Winchell turned to me and remarked, "What a crime that she was born in America."

"What did you say? Why?"

"That's her real tragedy. If she'd been born in any other country, she'd be hailed as the greatest actress in the world, and we'd be spared all this drool about Bernhardt and Duse."

Laurette was an incurable romantic. While she was making a picture at Metro she came in contact with Jack Gilbert. She responded to his youth and he bowed low to her talent. They would stand in the center of the lot and gas away to each other for hours.

When the picture ended and she and Hartley were ready to leave for New York, they entertained dinner guests at their Beverly Hills bungalow. King Vidor was there paying court to Lady Thelma Furness; Monta Bell was with a beauty not his own; King's ex-wife, Eleanor Boardman, was purring with someone else. The only two uncomplicated people were Hartley Manners and Hopper.

Jack Gilbert turned up with a complete Hawaiian band to serenade Laurette as a farewell gesture. He instructed them what songs to sing, and we sat on the porch while the Hawaiians played ad infinitum, not to say ad nauseam. Finally I couldn't take any more and jumped up to tell Jack off, but Hartley laid a hand on mine. "Please don't," he said quietly.

En route to the train next morning Hartley stopped at a florist's to send me flowers with this note: "We understand. They will in time. Until then, God bless you."

Hartley died not long after, suddenly, before Laurette could say, "I'm sorry," or pour out her gratitude to him. Remorse drove her into hiding, and for years no one saw her. She put on a mountain of flesh. Not until she got the play *The Glass Menagerie* and became interested in its author, Tennessee Williams, did she slim down and return to the stage. Her last was to be her greatest performance.

I have a picture of Laurette hanging on my office wall. On it she wrote: "When I was a girl in Blue Mountain and you were a barefoot girl." Beside it hangs one of Grace Moore with her back to the camera and her arms outstretched. She's singing in Paris on a balcony, looking down over hundreds of people jammed in the street. Grace wrote: "Thank God for balconies!"

Shortly after Gilbert's serenade I made *The Snob*, with Jack Gilbert, Norma Shearer, and Conrad Nagel. Leatrice Joy, Jack's wife, took it into her head at that moment to divorce him, even though she was expecting his child. Gilbert was infuriated, thinking his prestige as the screen's top lover might be upset.

As a matter of fact, it might have been. Production was halted for several momentous days while it was debated whether a scandal might ruin the picture and Conrad Nagel should be given Jack's role.

In moments of peril the shrewd minds of motion-picture brass grow brasher. They crossed their fingers and took a chance, leaving Jack in his role. That established a precedent, and even today when actors step out of line and you're

sure they'll be dismissed the publicity departments grind out gaudier stories and the stars remain as they are—or grow worse.

14

When picture parts became scarce, I left the Hollywood Hotel and went to live in a three-room basement in a private house. All I needed was a place to sleep, change my clothes, and make my own breakfast. I thought nothing of it; in fact, I rather enjoyed it until one morning the iceman came through my bedroom to fill the box in the furnace room, looked down at me, and said, "You're in pictures, ain't you?"

"Sure."

"Well, what's an actress doing in a hole like this? Haven't you got any man to take care of you?"

"I don't need a man; I take care of myself," I said.

"Gee whiz, lady! I don't know how anybody could live this way; I couldn't."

That was too much. Holding my head up to my friends was one thing, but having my iceman pity me was something else again.

A friend of mine in the real-estate business told me about a new subdivision near the property where the Fox Studio was being built and said I could double my money in a couple of months by investing in a lot. I decided to have a look at it.

We rode all around the property. Houses were going up so fast you would have thought they didn't cost any more than the one we used to have back home for our dog. I listened with a very attentive ear to the prices and was thinking seriously of buying a lot and maybe building a little shack on it.

Fact is, my friend was pretty sure that he had made a sale. On the way home he said, "Now I'll take you over and show you some choicer places. Of course they cost more." What he showed me was Wilshire Boulevard property. Even I had wit enough to know that Wilshire would be the main highway from Los Angeles to the sea.

As we were driving along I saw a sign on a vacant lot: "This 400-foot lot can be had for $2,000 down."

I said nothing to my companion, but it was so much more

impressive than anything he'd shown me that immediately after we returned to his office and said good-by I jumped into my car and went out to read the sign more carefully. I jotted down the name and telephone number of the broker, got him on the phone, and said, "What about this down payment of two thousand dollars?"

"That's it, lady."

"Well, what's the price of the lot?"

"Six thousand, and it's the greatest bargain in town."

Then I consulted my friend Harry Lombard, who said, "Grab it!" Next day I did.

At last I owned a piece of real estate in California; I was proud as Punch. Two years later I sold it for a profit of ten thousand dollars and promptly bought myself a little home on Fairfax Avenue, just off Sunset Boulevard, where Bill and I lived with my faithful maid Dagmar for many years.

Harry Lombard always said, "You'll never go broke taking a profit." I think the man who bought the lot from me went broke, because he paid taxes on that piece of land for twelve years. Now there's a gorgeous apartment house on it; but I couldn't wait for that; I had to have my home.

I got my house and an offer for a Marion Davies picture, *Zander the Great*, with Holbrook Blinn, at about the same time. Frances Marion wrote the script, and her soon-to-be husband George Hill directed it.

Getting into a Marion Davies picture was like inheriting an annuity taken out by your grandfather without your knowing anything about it. It meant a long engagement, endless excitement, distinguished visitors on the set, and a sure invitation to the fabulous Hearst ranch, San Simeon.

Marion Davies held in her hands the greatest power of any woman on earth, and I'm not forgetting the queens, some of whom lost their heads. She had something royalty didn't have—the power of the press. She never misused it.

Marion developed many good habits. Friends fallen on hard times would get nice fat checks to pose for publicity pictures. She'd wrap her best fur coat around a girl who wanted to impress a producer to land a job; she loaned her jewels—never cared much for them anyway.

Once one of her cooks, a widow with a small daughter, became seriously ill. Before the woman died, Marion promised her that she would take care of the child, Mary Grace, and bring her up as though she were her own. Mary Grace developed into a very pretty, sweet blond girl. She was also well educated.

After Mary Grace broke her back in an automobile accident she was hospitalized for many months. Then Bill Curley, publisher of the New York *Journal-American*, became attracted to the girl, and Marion helped to further the romance. Curley was old enough to be Mary Grace's father, but she accepted his marriage proposal and the wedding was arranged at San Simeon.

The bridesmaids were Marion Davies, Doris Duke, and Mrs. Laddie Sanford; the matron of honor was Margaret Roach, former wife of Hal Roach, Hollywood producer. It was a gala event, and the marriage, I'm glad to relate, turned out to be a happy one.

A visit to the Hearst ranch was a ticket to never-never land. Never has there been such a place, and never will we see its like again. From the time you left home until you returned your expenses were paid.

The castle which W.R. insisted on calling a ranch was like a lion taking its ease with cubs scattered among its paws; it was surrounded by three guesthouses of marble, called "bungalows." Each had twenty-two rooms. Mr. Hearst lived in one of them; on my first visit I was housed in the same one.

I recall hearing W.R. outside my window one morning, strolling along in conversation with his head gardener. In that thin, high voice he was saying, "The place looks beautiful, but I'm disappointed in these flowers around my bungalow. I liked the lilies better last year." I heard a murmured regret from the gardener. W.R. added, "These are pretty, but not as fragrant."

The following morning thousands of auratum lilies in full bloom were around the bungalow in a bed six feet wide. How they got there I'll never know. They must have been flown in from San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Jose, wherever the gardener had been able to track them down. W.R. was pleased as a child. I've known him to move one tree a few feet at a cost of thousands.

The palace housed treasures and antiques that Kubla Khan would have envied. Gobelin tapestries adorned the walls, banners of English kings stirred gently overhead in the dining hall. I used to gaze at the ceiling and wonder what would happen if a little toe of one of the cupids in the carving should fall and hit an honored guest on the head. In the vaults my eyes bulged at Georgian silver; W.R. had cornered the market.

The bedrooms would make a princess of the *Arabian Nights* pale with awe. The bed I occupied once belonged to a

De' Medici, and I spent half the night imagining what foul deed had been hatched in the spot where I lay.

Once a starlet, visiting San Simeon for the first time, entered her room on a dead run, forgetting that her bed was cradled on full-sized lions of carved wood jutting out a couple of feet from the four corners. One paw caught her on the big toe and split it. You never heard such a scream. She thought a lion from W.R.'s hilltop zoo had got in by mistake.

At San Simeon two household rules were made to be obeyed:

1. Unless you were ill, you came down to breakfast. (But that was no hardship, since it was served until 11 A.M.)

2. No liquor in your room, no bottles brought in suitcases. (Cocktails, as many as you wished, were served before lunch and dinner, and wine during both meals, with an occasional highball while you played cards or worked a jigsaw puzzle. If a bottle of whisky were found in your room, you got your marching orders down the hill.)

If you happened to be visiting the ranch on your birthday, you were given a party. It happened to me once. There was a cake with my name on it. I was toasted in my favorite pink champagne and received a small Cartier diamond bracelet, a fitted traveling case, and a huge bottle of perfume. There was no distress shopping at the last moment; a huge closet was kept filled with appropriate presents—enough and to spare for anyone's birthday.

In the house was a theater where pictures were seen long before their release. A saddle horse was ready for you at any moment. No matter how many house guests were there, a horse was provided for each one.

W.R. led the parade over hill and dale, and woe to you if you were unfortunate enough to get a nag that needed exercise and went ahead of W.R.'s. He liked Marion to ride directly behind him. She was terrified of horses, and half a dozen of the finest and safest were bought for her. She was a good sport and went along on the rides, but never for one moment enjoyed herself.

The long overnight trips, which W.R. referred to as "picnics," were worst of all for Marion. A picnic consisted of leaving San Simeon after lunch and stopping in a pleasant valley by a running stream. Servants went ahead with chuck wagons filled to overflowing with the same good food you got at the castle—pâté de foie gras, thick filet mignon, and sparkling burgundy. After sleeping on cots under army tents, guests rode all next day to one of Mr. Hearst's faraway

ranches for a dinner of chicken with all the trimmings. Automobiles waited to whisk you home in the usual luxury.

Only once did I have the pleasure of going on one of these so-called picnics. I became saddlesore long before reaching the promised land and practically fell off my horse when we got there. Dusk was closing in. There were no chuck wagons, no cooks, no Mexicans with guitars, no nothing. The more rugged members of the party, with Mr. Hearst in the lead, went on a search. The wagon had broken down; it was being repaired at top speed, but food would be delayed.

Someone had enough presence of mind to build a huge campfire. We started singing the current hits of the day. When the wagons hove in sight, provisions were unpacked and cocktails were hurriedly mixed and passed round in tin cups while we waited for food.

After dinner it was too late to put up more than two tents—one to house W.R. and the other for Marion. They were over to one side against a hill. The rest of us slept on cots under the stars.

Frances Marion and I were side by side and nearly had hysterics at the sleeping apparel of some of our rugged stars. Of course we all wore our riding clothes, but some of the men were muffled so that only their eyes, nose, and mouth could be seen.

Long before dawn a rustle among the dead leaves awakened me. I turned over to look, and there was Big Chief and Little Chief—Mr. Hearst bundled up from his neck to his ankles in a long gray dressing gown with a Peter Pan collar, and Marion also in a dressing gown. Stealthily they tiptoed down to where the horses were tethered, and started searching in the saddlebags. They didn't miss one. Then W.R. shook his head and started back to his tent.

I was in a lather of curiosity and finally got Marion alone to ask what he was looking for. "Oh," she said, "his valet forgot to put in his Seidlitz powders."

You've heard about W.R. having a telephone behind each tree. That story isn't too great an exaggeration, because in the wilds of northern California I saw him stop on a summit, rein in his horse, ride around a tree, take out a telephone, call San Simeon, and give an order for an editorial he wanted in the paper next day.

Coming home by automobile, we went through a forest fire. Flames leaped across the road over our heads to the trees on the other side—a regular inferno. Several of the cars were stopped by highway police to see if any of our

males could help fight the fire. After looking them over the police waved us on.

One year I was asked to show Bernard M. Baruch around San Simeon. Bernie lives no drab life himself. His South Carolina plantation, Hobcaw Barony, situated on the King's Highway built by the British many years ago, is no shack. But while San Simeon shelters treasures from the four corners of the world, the treasures on Bernie's Southern plantation were bestowed by God and nature.

His house, an old rambling colonial affair which is simply furnished (no signed antiques at Hobcaw), is surrounded by two thousand acres of pine trees and live oaks. In the spring, peeping through the pines, are thousands of dogwood in full bloom, looking for all the world like they were dressed for a bridal procession for a mating with the giant fir trees. Azalea hedges fifteen feet high add a blaze of color. When the breeze ruffles the Spanish moss hanging from the live oaks on a moonlight night, you see what looks like a celestial ballet in dress rehearsal.

The soil is so rich Bernie boasts that you could throw a seed on the ground and next day have a plant a foot tall. All kinds of wild animals roam the estate as well. Even crocodiles inhabit the swamps.

The nearest telephone is twenty-five miles away. Even when Franklin Roosevelt spent a month at Hobcaw, no telephone was allowed in the house.

Bernie takes his sunning on a folding chair in the garden. His wisdom is born of the good earth. At Hobcaw he gets relaxation and a renewal of the spirit.

It's no wonder that he was overcome by San Simeon. When I showed him around the Hearst place, he kept saying in an awed voice, "Why, Hedda, he's a blooming nabob. Nobody but a nabob ever liked like this. What would any man want with all these possessions?"

One day I asked Mr. Hearst that question. "I buy things so I can enjoy them. And my friends enjoy them too," he answered.

Many people have that sense of acquisitive possession. W. R. Hearst was the only man I ever knew who was able to indulge it to the hilt. He knew the worth of every treasure before it was put up at auction, and had buyers stationed all over Europe. Many mornings his secretary, Colonel Joe Willicomb, would bring down an order from the bedchamber and get his man on long-distance in England, Spain, or South America. "The governor's bid on such and such a

priceless thingumbob is so much," he would say, naming an astronomical figure. And he always got it.

That included a priceless Vandyke painting. I'd heard a story about how Mr. Hearst got the canvas and asked him about it.

"That's a secret," he answered.

"Check me if I'm wrong," I said. "For ten years Lord Duveen longed for this particular Vandyke and finally bought it. Then he brought a famous architect—Sir Charles Allom, who had been knighted by King George V—from England to design a special room around it.

"They were building it when you called on Duveen in New York. When he showed you his treasure, right away you said, 'How much?'

"Duveen said, 'It's not for sale.'

" 'How much?' you repeated.

"Lord Duveen didn't want to sell; he loved it. 'Well,' you said, 'if you did sell it, what would the price be?'

"He put the price so high he didn't think you'd want to sink that much in it. He said, 'Six hundred thousand dollars.'

" 'I'll take it,' you said."

W.R. threw back his head and laughed. "Well, Hedda," he exclaimed, "you've got your facts straight. And I've got the Vandyke."

I sat with eighty people at the same table for one of W.R.'s fabulous birthday dinners. Everyone was in fancy dress; the costumes were trucked up to San Simeon from the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studio, with sewing women, hairdressers, wigmakers, and make-up women flown in by plane.

Before the party a friend of Marion's made a fuss about the dress sent up for her, complaining she didn't like it. So Marion took hers off, gave it to the girl, and put on the despised one. A small incident at a party for which people flew in from all over the world, but an insight into Marion Davies' character.

Jack Gilbert had promised to come but didn't show up, and next day Marion received twenty dozen American Beauty roses. "Too bad they didn't arrive in time for the party," she said. "W.R. loves roses."

W.R. brought workmen from Italy to build the twin towers of San Simeon. In one he installed a carillon from which music poured out over sea and mountains from a height of seven stories.

I usually had the same bedroom in the tower. It was like a jewel case, with the walls hung in gold brocade. I never knew which meant more to me, the gold room or the

view from its windows. When the fog rolled in at dusk from the ocean, the castle floated in its own misty gray sea.

I loved San Simeon and went there so often that W.R. would say to newcomers, "Hedda'll show you around; she knows every nook and corner nearly as well as I do."

One day I was explaining to Katharine Dayton, co-author of *The First Lady:* "All the ocean front you see—fifty miles of it—Mr. Hearst owns. All that land and those mountains as far as the eye can see—three hundred and seventy-five thousand acres—W.R. owns all that except that one tiny peak. That one you can hardly see——"

"You're wrong, Hedda," came a thin, high voice from behind us. "I own that peak too."

I was there the day Frank Knox arrived. He was owner of two small New England newspapers and was doing okay financially. While the Coolidges were in the White House he walked in and out as though it were his own home. This was the third time W.R. had sent for him. He wanted Frank to build up the Hearst empire in New England, and Frank feared he would be offered so much money he couldn't refuse.

Knox blew in during a gale featuring thunder, lightning, and rain. Most of the guests were asleep or reading in their rooms. I'd been walking in the storm and looked like Tugboat Annie in heavy gear, old dress, raincoat, and sturdy boots.

I greeted Mr. Knox in the main hall, introduced him to the housekeeper, and told him lunch was at one-thirty.

W.R. came in for lunch, then for dinner. He put Knox beside him at the table and was a perfect host, but disappeared immediately after each meal.

After four days of this, Knox was fit to be tied. He couldn't know that he was getting the silent treatment, calculated to break down his resistance. He had to talk to someone during the days of waiting, and poured out his heart to me.

"Do you want to accept this proposition?" I asked.

"No, I don't."

"Then why not leave? I can order a car and get you off the hill."

"I've waited so long, it would be rude to go now."

I laughed. "So you're going to accept his offer whatever it is," I said.

"I guess so," he answered ruefully.

I never saw Frank Knox again until he stood on a platform of a Milwaukee auditorium to make the principal address at an American Legion Convention. He had accepted

W.R.'s proposition. In fact, he'd replaced Tom White, a long-time friend and trusted employee of W.R., who relinquished the job for a lesser one to give Knox greater power. Frank also ran the Chicago *Daily News*. Roosevelt had been elected President, and Knox, although a Republican, became his Secretary of the Navy.

As Knox got up to speak in Milwaukee, I whispered loudly, "Hi, Frank—remember San Simeon?" It was a dirty trick, but I couldn't have resisted the impulse if my life had depended on it.

I've often wondered if Frank Knox might not be alive today if he'd never visited San Simeon. The power he attained was less than the pressure used against him, which became too great to bear. I'm certain it hastened his end.

15

To F. Scott Fitzgerald it was the Lost Generation. To Hollywood it was the Golden Twenties. Everything turned to money. Girls were plucked from the ribbon counter, the dairy lunch, from Hungary without their being able to speak a word of English; small-town clerks and collar-ad boys all were fitted into the Hollywood mold. The symbol of the mold was a golden calf.

Gloria Swanson was the most talked-of star of that part of the century. She was unpredictable, often unmanageable, and I watched her goings on for years. Born shrewd, she took advantage of every break. She reached her great period under contract to Cecil DeMille. What he couldn't think of, she did.

I never made a picture with her until *Sunset Boulevard,* but I knew her well.

Gloria's romances were as talked about as her clothes and her pictures. During the days when Gloria was in love with Mickey Neilan she was sent to New York to make *ZaZa* under Allan Dwan's direction. Wisely Allan saved the love scenes until Mickey could follow her to town. All he had to do then was step aside and let Nature, name of Mickey Neilan, take its course.

When Gloria finished *Madame Sans Gêne* in Paris, she returned to the land of her birth in a triumph equaled only by the progress among us of Queen Marie of Rumania. The star brought with her a new husband, the Marquis de la

Falaise de la Coudraye, her third, acquired while she worked on the picture.

When Gloria and Hank Falaise entered a theater in New York, even if the first act was half over, the curtain was lowered while they were seated. When everybody had had a good look the curtain was raised and the actors went on with their play. Such gnashing of teeth!

In Hollywood I stood at the entrance of the old Paramount Studio at Sunset and Vine, where the National Broadcasting Company is now located, and watched Gloria's triumph in the film capital. Vine Street was roped off; traffic on Sunset Boulevard was halted for blocks. In the middle of the street, directly opposite the studio gates, a raised platform was erected. Overhead huge banners proclaimed: "Welcome Home, Gloria!" On the platform a brass band blared in the noonday sun.

Schools were let out for the day. Every rosebush in town had been scuttled, the petals shredded into large garbage cans placed at convenient intervals, and the children instructed to grab handfuls and throw them when the star passed by. I thought sympathetically of the street cleaners. Would they altogether appreciate Miss Swanson?

When the royal car with the Queen and her Consort turned off Sunset into Vine, the crowd went mad. Flowers made a pink snowstorm, women swooned, men got emotional. Inside the studio Gloria took time to collapse.

That night the première of *Madame Sans Gêne* was held in a downtown theater. My escort was Mitch Leisen, then Cecil B. DeMille's assistant, now one of our leading directors. Mitch hired the longest, sleekest limousine left in town—we had to be important too. His driver got an extra ten bucks for parking behind DeMille's car. It was an unwritten law that at every première DeMille's car was Number 1. That night Mitch and I were Number 2.

Minus kids and garbage cans of rose petals, the same screaming mob was on hand. Police dragged Gloria through it into the theater.

After the picture had been shown, a roar went up for her. Slowly, oh so slowly, she came down the aisle, bowing to this side and that. Her gown of heavy silver cloth was perfect.

The police convoyed her slowly out of the theater. It was a night to remember, and I'll bet she remembered it when she attended the première of *Sunset Boulevard*.

But business is business. At the studio things settled down to a battle for supremacy. During Gloria's sojourn in Paris,

Pola Negri had been installed and was being given the full treatment as the great European star.

Pola, on her trip to America, had been lucky or unlucky, whichever way you look at it. Aboard the boat was that Irish pixie Mabel Normand, who took it upon herself to coach Pola as to what she should do on arrival at the film capital. After all, Mabel pointed out to her slyly, she was bringing with her a big European reputation. Was she not also a friend of the great Ernst Lubitsch, whose Lubitsch touches were even then being talked about?

Pola wanted to hold the position she had established for herself abroad. Mabel, mind you, had scarcely heard of Pola Negri. She just thought it would be fun to put bullets in a gun and let Pola fire it. Mabel always loved fireworks.

"If the studio offers you anything but the best," she prompted the Pole, "You must say, 'No.' Just that. 'No.' That's the way a great star always acts. They'll expect it of you. Even when they don't expect it say, 'No,' anyway. If you do as I say, you'll be greater than Gloria Swanson. You'll be on top of the pile." Pile of what she didn't say.

Pola drank in this advice like Mabel drank champagne. She'd heard of Mabel Normand but had no idea that she was just a little comedy star, not a great glamorous planet like herself. Nor did she know that while she was getting this windfall of free advice, which later was to be worth a fortune to her, Mabel was merely playing an airy joke on Hollywood. Mabel herself couldn't get the better of the Mister Bigs, but she didn't resent it. She just admired anyone who could, and was not averse to helping someone else do it.

Pola followed the free advice. Straightway she got the Number 1 treatment—until Gloria's return; then she wouldn't let go.

Some press agent, I forget which one, conceived the idea of a cat feud. Nowadays we play rougher, sometimes even with skunks. In those days skunks hadn't been descented and cats were safer.

Gloria loved cats; Pola hated them. Pola ordered all cats banished from the lot. Her cohorts ran around the studio snatching up cats and dispatching them in bags. Gloria's loyalists scoured back alleys, rounding up stray cats to let loose inside the studio. Cans of milk were put out to woo them, tidbits of liver thrown hither and yon.

In the still of the night Gloria's cats would be seized and cast out. In the morning two more would appear to take the place of every one. It couldn't continue indefinitely; even in Hollywood there's a limit on cats.

Then Gloria had it over Negri in a new way. She rode from her dressing room to the set in a wheel chair, like a surrey with the fringe on top, pushed by a Negro boy. "Oh, she's just showing off," everybody said. Gloria swears to this day that her costumes were so cumbersome and heavy that she couldn't walk the distance to the stage.

Eventually Gloria decided that Hollywood was just a suburb in search of a city, whereas New York was the center of the universe. She'd make her pictures hereafter at Paramount's Long Island studios. Whereupon she blew town.

If Pola thought she'd routed Swanson, she was mistaken. Gloria still reigned as queen.

Soon after her arrival in New York her contract was up for renewal. She was offered twenty thousand dollars a week —before the day of income taxes, mind you! Cannily she deduced that if she were worth that much to Paramount, she'd be worth more to herself. She announced that her pictures would be made independently.

Right there Gloria made her biggest mistake. As an independent she had only Swanson. Working for Paramount, she had all the facilities of that studio at her service. When she went independent she got not only Paramount down on her but the other studios as well. She was establishing a precedent, setting in circulation a dangerous idea. Other stars might follow.

In the picture business when a crisis threatens to pinch the bankbook the big boys get together and form a front. They neglect to do this for the real issues such as morals and public relations.

As soon as Gloria arrived in New York she bought an apartment. Frank Crowninshield, editor of *Town and Country*, introduced her to a new Spanish artist who was all the rage. She had him design four doors for her apartment, one thousand dollars apiece. Living on a scale top producers couldn't afford, she always spent money faster than she made it.

She couldn't find stories or directors to suit her. She couldn't hire the players she wanted. It was a foregone conclusion that, between her extravagances and her independent setup, she would fail.

She did.

She divorced Hank Falaise, who was speedily taken on as a husband by Constance Bennett. Gloria married Michael Farmer, had a daughter by him, divorced him.

Gloria's first talkie was *The Trespasser*, and Laura Hope Crews coached her for every syllable, pouring all her

knowledge and stage experience into the task. She practically lived night and day with Gloria. Laura was aided and abetted by Edmund Goulding, a director with a sly gift for dragging forth talent from the remotest corners in which one may hide it. *The Trespasser* was a hit, the first of Gloria's many comebacks.

The production of *Queen Kelly* was something else again. Many things turned sour, and the picture never was finished.

Gloria made another comeback some years later, at RKO. But the story was wretched and she wasn't much better. Wisely deciding to learn to act, she took to the straw-hat circuit in the East. It takes guts for a girl who's had everything, whose name has been blazoned throughout the world, to play week after week in summer stock with people whose names aren't even known within a radius of five miles.

Gloria tried another marriage to the wealthy and social William Davey of New York City. That failed also, and again she went to the divorce court. After Davey's death it was discovered that he had left most of his estate to the John Tracy Clinic, started by Mrs. Spencer Tracy (a woman Davey had never met) for children with impaired hearing. Gloria's name was not mentioned in the will.

Once more, though, she came out on top. She got her chance in *Sunset Boulevard;* she made it her street.

I daresay when Swanson's eighty-five she'll be doing another comeback in a wheel chair. She has the will and the intestinal fortitude to push through all obstacles when success is up ahead. Then there's no stopping her. And I hope I'll be right in there acting with her.

Movies began growing up around 1926 when *Ben Hur* became the big noise, and all Hollywood producers took up the cry: "We've got to make one bigger than *Ben Hur!*" It was in '26 that Jack Dempsey lost a decision to Shakespeare-spouting Gene Tunney, which could have given our producers the idea that brain ruled over brawn, because along about that time they started to woo famous authors.

Sam Goldwyn brought the first batch of name writers to Hollywood, and the rest followed suit. Joseph Hergesheimer, author of *The Three Black Pennys* and *Java Head,* left the comfort of his Dower House in Pennsylvania for a home in Santa Monica.

In those days, when our citizens decided to honor a celebrity, they went all out. Joe was met at the station with a Rolls-Royce and chauffeur, both placed at his disposal for the duration. He was installed in a wing of the Jesse Lasky

home; the Laskys maintained two houses—one for themselves and the other for distinguished guests.

Joe, so fat he should have known better, suddenly announced his desire to learn the tango. A pretty lady instructor was summoned. Did he prefer blonde or brunette? "Both," said Joe. This was the life! He'd also like to play a little golf. A golf pro was added; also a swimming instructor.

The names of the hostesses hungry for the chance to lionize him were carefully screened by Joe. He had approval of menus, wines, guests—oh, they really turned out the honor guard for Joe Hergesheimer.

He was especially attracted to one hostess, Aileen Pringle. She was the boon companion of his friend Henry L. Mencken, the Baltimore Sage. Only top-drawer writers were given dinners at the Pringle home; what evenings they were!

Aileen was a Metro star; not triple-A, but her films which co-starred Lew Cody made enough money to pay for some of the epics which failed. Aileen was a good actress but wouldn't conform. She indulged in the cardinal sin of receiving only friends in her home; she never invited her bosses—any of them. When her long-term deal ended, it wasn't renewed, and her career was over.

True she did befriend David O. Selznick when he worked in the prop department at MGM Studio for fifty bucks a week. She fed his ego, assured him he'd be the biggest breeze in Hollywood someday. But who would expect the great Selznick to remember those days?

David's memory is notoriously short, but it failed him completely the night he got every award that could be heaped upon him for *Gone With the Wind.* It was embarrassing to see how many times he was called to the podium and handed a golden Oscar. It was even more embarrassing that during all his speeches he never once mentioned the great lady responsible for all his glory. Her name? Margaret Mitchell. She was only the Author.

I once listened in on a conversation between Hergesheimer and the highest-paid studio scenario writer of the moment, who asked plaintively, "Why do my books always turn out mediocre?"

"A good book is like having a baby," Joe replied. "If you waste your being and your love on inferior people, you take on their low quality and it waters down your creative ability. You waste your substance and forfeit the right to creation." Huh! What's that again?

That year of 1926, Joe paused in Hollywood so long that he was moved from the Lasky home into a bungalow at the

Ambassador Hotel to make way for another famous author.

Joe's bungalow faced Pola Negri's. Rudolph Valentino had died in New York and was about to be interred in Hollywood. From his bungalow Joe watched Pola emerge in deep mourning, with the veil thrown back so newsreel cameras could record how she faced going on living with bravery and fortitude.

Shots were taken. One cameraman yelled: "Pola—the light's not good on your face—will you do it again?"

"And," Joe reported to me with awe, "darned if she didn't! It's the only time I ever saw a retake on mourning."

Valentino having made his final exit, John Barrymore was simultaneously coming into his own as the screen's greatest lover. I was set to play in *Don Juan* with him. I didn't wait to be called for my sequences, but sat on the stage from the beginning, to watch him act. John always responded better when he had an audience.

I saw a rehearsal with a cloak that was as good as anything Jack ever did before a full audience. As Barrymore came on the set and faced a cheval glass, the cloak was handed to him. He flung it over his shoulders. The drape displeased him. He tried to force it to his way, but it had been designed to hang differently. When the cloak couldn't be made to submit he grew angry. Every flip of the material became like a whiplash. Plainly the cloak had the upper hand of him.

He tore it to shreds, threw it on the floor, and roared, "When you have one I can handle, let me know and I'll do the scene!"

The day of our one scene together finally arrived. I was to play a married woman who, having fallen desperately under his spell, had my own key to his bedroom. I discovered that Jack had lost out to another man concerning a lady he really cared for. So his mind was on her, not on me.

When we rehearsed he couldn't have been more charming or disembodied. But before the take he said to me, "You go ahead and act your part. Pay no attention to anything I say to you."

He shot me a devilish twinkle and away we went. If he'd used his sword instead of words he couldn't have pinned me tighter to the wall. He nailed me there with language spurted like a cobra's venom. He looked like a snake, too. Good God, I didn't have to act! The expression called for leaped into my face at his torrential words. He knew what he was doing—I had only to follow his lead. He crowned his barrage of expletives by running his dagger through

my heart. I fell. He kicked my body under the bed, then opened the door to my jealous husband.

In addition to Barrymore's acting, *Don Juan* made history also because it was the first picture to have a synchronized musical score. Thank the Lord it was silent otherwise; John's dialogue would have given our present-day censors apoplexy.

This wasn't the end of my acting with Barrymore. After Jack had lost the cross-continent chase to Elaine Barrie and married her, and I had become a Hollywood columnist, Mitch Leisen gave me a call to come to Paramount and be a member of his gang—Claudette Colbert, Jack Barrymore, Don Ameche, Elaine Barrie, and Billy Daniel—in a little opus called *Midnight*.

When I got the phone call I ran like a hound-dog in the moonlight. I was there before the contract was dry. In *Midnight* I was a rather nice character, for a change.

The engagement was pure joy from start to finish because of Barrymore's fund of stories. They never ran dry.

Jack had his own ideas of acclimatizing the young to life. One day my son Bill came to visit on the set, and Jack said to me, "Bring him to my dressing room." When we were all seated comfortably he gave Bill a long look. "Son," he said, "when I was a little older than you—and just about as good-looking—I made my first trip to Australia. I hadn't been long on the stage. Willie Collier, bless his heart, took a chance on me.

"I'd gone through the San Francisco earthquake; the shake threw me out of bed into a bathtub. Uncle John Drew said of it, 'It took a convulsion of nature to make Jack take a bath, and the U.S. Army to put him to work.'

"After I helped put out the fire, I went along to Australia with Willie. Before we landed I had a cable from a chum who said he'd meet me at the dock and not to make any sleeping arrangements—he'd made reservations.

"He had. He took me to the fanciest whorehouse in Australia. It seems the madam, a charming, good-looking woman, had fallen for my pal, and he'd lived in her house ten years—rent, liquor, and food free. She kept saying to him that any friend of his was a friend of hers and nothing too good for them. And nothing was!

"Our opening night she and her beautiful girls in their evening gowns occupied front-row seats. After the performance we went back to her house. Back home, you might say. She locked the doors and gave a party. Her hospitality and good taste had no limit. I've attended lots of parties, but none to equal that.

"I lived there during the whole engagement. In fact, I proposed marriage to one bright girl domiciled there. The girl had more sense than I—she turned me down.

"When the play had run its course, and closing night came, I insisted on giving a farewell party. Madam agreed. I ordered the finest of everything. Again she locked her doors, and it was our one happy family that gathered in her parlor and made merry till dawn.

"When my bags were packed and in the cab, I asked for my bill. Madam said, 'Mr. Barrymore, never in my life has anyone given me so much pleasure. I would be ungrateful indeed if I accepted pay for such joy.'

"Our mutual friend saw me off. At the end he said, 'Barrymore, why work? Why don't you get a setup like mine?' "

Bill's eyes were practically bugging out. With a sly look at me, Jack said, "You know, I've always regretted I didn't follow my pal's advice."

It was also in 1926 that Vilma Banky married Rod La Rocque in Hollywood. Vilma was Sam Goldwyn's gleaming star, and the film world will long remember the send-off he gave her.

First the showers. There were twenty-two. I know; I went to them all and, not being overburdened at the time with this world's goods, was hard put to buy the presents required. They'd take only the best. In those days it would be as much as your life was worth to take some conversation piece from the five-and-ten. My sense of humor wasn't as highly developed as it is now. Today I'd take any old thing, but how could I when my livelihood depended on getting more jobs?

I've yet to hear of Vilma giving as much as a luncheon to those who gave her those wedding showers. Maybe it was an oversight. As a Viennese, perhaps Vilma considered it crude to do things our way. Some people are destined to receive, others to give.

By the time the wedding day arrived even Sam Goldwyn was fed up. Vilma was so ecstatic over her loot (as it's usually referred to in Hollywood), she wanted it displayed where "the little people" could get a look at it too. Miss Banky wanted J. W. Robinson's, one of Los Angeles' largest department stores, to clear all merchandise from their windows and show her presents, proving that she'd got the gift haul of the century.

Sam and his wife Frances had a time talking her out of it. The idea that this display of opulence might antagonize

paying picture customers never entered Vilma's artistic blond head. It buzzed around in Goldwyn's noggin like a wasp, and he wasn't getting stung.

When the day of the wedding arrived it was a sizzler. You were told to bring all three invitation cards: one to get you through the crowd; one into the church; the other, if you were lucky enough to live, to the reception.

I made the church all right. Went stag; always do. You see more. On the way down the aisle my usher, Ronnie Colman, whispered, "Where do you want to sit?"

I picked, as who wouldn't, a place by the real First Lady of Hollywood, Mrs. Cecil DeMille, and settled down beside her to wait. We waited and wilted. Vilma had been given orders not to start for the church until Sam gave the signal. She had a police escort to whip through traffic. Speed laws didn't count for our weddings.

However, someone mixed the signals. The officiating priest arrived at the chancel, did all the fascinating little things done at such a time, and turned expectantly to the center aisle. No bride. He waited, his hands folded benignly over his crisp white surplice. He turned his back to us, did more fascinating little things, looked over his shoulder with a small frown, then turned his face to the altar and stood there stolidly.

There was a shriek of sirens. At long last the bride was arriving. Newsreel cameras outside and within the church kept grinding away as Vilma and her attendants floated down the aisle. The organ boomed forth an odd selection—King of Kings from *The Messiah*. It was by a happy coincidence that best man DeMille's picture *King of Kings* was playing at Grauman's Chinese Theater.

As the bridal party neared the chancel and the bridegroom and his best man moved toward the bride, an old dowager, hot and worn to the nub by the long delay, turned herself around in her seat, surveyed the crowd, and remarked in a hoarse whisper heard distinctly throughout the church, "Heavens above! All this fuss, and not a virgin in the bunch!"

The reception was the best of all, featuring a buffet table laden with orchids and rows of luscious brown turkeys, baked hams, salads, rolls, petits fours—and guards all around it! You were supposed to *look* at the food. Peg Talmadge, mother of Norma and Connie, got hungry and asked a caterer's man for a turkey sandwich. He gave her ham. She snapped, "I said turkey!"

"I know, madam," he replied, "but we're not cutting them now." For years Peg had got her way; that's the first time I

ever saw her turned down. She ate the ham but it almost choked her.

So we swallowed the wedding—if not the buffet. Funny how things slip back into your memory. I've attended many weddings in my day, but this was more circus than ceremony. I remember wishing at the time that I had a column so I could write it up.

The couple went on their well-publicized honeymoon and returned. For a year afterward, Sam paid for Vilma's English lessons. But she never would learn. She'd got her man, so why worry?

Rod was cast as Norma Shearer's leading man in *Let Us Be Gay*. His part was small; Norma got most of the footage; and Rod was so annoyed he'd bury his head in a newspaper while her close-ups were shot and read his lines to her from behind the paper. I warned him at the time that this might be his last movie unless he showed more enthusiasm. He didn't, and it was.

But peace, it's wonderful! Vilma and Rod are still married, and, lo and behold, to each other! She plays golf, and he sells real estate.

16

Frances Marion wrote *The Winning of Barbara Worth,* which starred Vilma Banky and Ronald Colman. As she was going into Sam Goldwyn's office for a story conference she noticed a rugged young man dressed like a cowboy leaning against the wall of the studio building. He was talking through the open window to Sam's secretary. As he was Marion's type, she gave him a second look, and as she went through the door even risked a third.

Inside, Sam was raging. He had been failed by his minions! The cast was assembled—all except a young steel-spring type to play the cowboy. How could he get star material without paying a fortune? Sam demanded. Whom could he get anyhow?

Frances said, "I can get you a young man who won't cost much—he looks like good material to me."

"Who?" Sam demanded suspiciously.

"Hold your horses, Sam. I'll let you know in five minutes." Frances went out and said to the secretary, "Does that young man want to act?"

"He sure does."

"Get him in here right away." Frances went back to Sam. "He'll be here in ten minutes."

He was. Sam looked him over. "What experience've you had?" he asked.

"None," drawled the cowboy. "I was an extra in one—two pictures."

Sam looked at Frances. She nodded. Her judgment had been sound enough for Goldwyn in the past. "All right, young man," Sam said, "I'll take a chance on you."

During the whole picture the cowboy never got off his pony, just sat there looking rugged. He fitted into the great outdoors, and the part was small. When the company went on location they thought so little of this lanky lad that they put him to bunk in the same tent with the Chinese cook. When the picture was finished, ready to be shown, no one even remembered his name. But they remember him now. I've heard a dozen people claim to have discovered him. Sure he would have been found eventually. Frances just beat everyone to it. His name is Gary Cooper.

Some spy at Paramount saw the preview of *The Winning of Barbara Worth*. When it came time to make *Children of Divorce*, with Clara Bow, they needed such a man as Coop. He was sent for, interviewed, and opined that he'd sure like to take a whack at it. Director Frank Lloyd said okay. It's one of the few instances of Sam Goldwyn letting the other fellow get ahead of him. To this day he'll thank you not to remind him that he was caught flat-footed. Throughout the years he's had Coop in many pictures, but it still gripes him to think he let him get away without even a struggle.

For *Children of Divorce*, Cooper was outfitted with dinner jacket, morning coat, smart business suits, tennis flannels, yachting clothes. In such duds he felt like a whale in a small aquarium. When on the back of a horse, or tenting with the Chinese cook, Cooper was all right; but when told to act natural in a Park Avenue drawing room, he felt like a maverick.

I know. I presided over the drawing room.

In his first scene Cooper had to come in on a noisy cocktail party where everybody was drinking and cavorting. Having made his pile in the West, this character came East to spend it and have fun. He was got up in a cutaway, a garment such as he'd seen but never worn in his life, and directed to take a sip of champagne from one girl's glass, chuck another pretty miss under the chin, borrow a drag

from her cigarette, kiss another flapper—all the time making with the gay city chatter.

When he began he looked like a guy starting his last mile. We spent the first day doing the scene and redoing it. He spent the second day on the same scene, doing it forty-eight times. I never felt so sorry for anyone.

During the second day's shooting I took Coop off-set and said, "You don't know me from Adam's ox, but I have a son —you remind me of him. He'd feel as you do having to play a silly scene like this. But why let it scare you? It's not a matter of life or death—only celluloid. They've got plenty more to put in that box. Relax, boy! Get that poker out of your spinal column." I even took him by the shoulders and shook him.

He shuddered. "I can't. I never did things like this."

Relax he could not, and Frank Lloyd, the gentlest of men, began to lose his temper. Clara Bow already had lost hers.

I liked Cooper from the start, and said to Frank, "Look. There's only one way you'll ever get that guy through this picture. Get him into a romantic clinch with Clara. She'll relax him—she's the only one who can."

"Okay," said Frank. "Go to work on it—it's your idea."

"Who, me? My business is acting." Too often my ideas turned and bit me! Yet the idea intrigued me, so I started to work on Clara.

The idea shocked her out of a year's growth. "Me—fall in love with that gawky lout who can't act and never will learn?" Then she yelped, "Where did they find him, anyway?"

"They lassoed him on the range in Montana," I said, "and he's pretty hot stuff. He's going to be a star, too, you mark my words. It would be a feather in your cap, my girl, if you could *discover* him, help him along, instead of throwing ice water in his face every time you look at him. He's done nothing to you——"

"He's wasted two whole days," she pouted.

"How many did you waste before Elinor Glyn dubbed you the 'It' girl?" I said.

"That's different."

"How?" But I could see she was interested.

Next day Coop didn't show up. However, Frank Lloyd and the studio executives looked at the first day's rushes. Even though Gary's acting was horrible, they detected something on the screen they liked. The studio sent out the alarm: "Get him back—get on with the picture."

What Cooper had on screen, even then, was an inward force, a smoldering something. You felt, "Golly, if the guy

ever opens up and lets go, he'll singe the celluloid!" You still feel it in some of his scenes, but as Al Jolson might have said, "You ain't seen nuthin' yet." John Barrymore saw one of Cooper's earlier pictures and said, "That fellow is the world's greatest actor. He can do, with no effort, what the rest of us spend years trying to learn: be perfectly natural."

Well, they got Coop back and eased him into some scenes where he rode a horse. He and the horse got through quite well.

Clara admitted he knew what to do with horses. "The trouble is," she said, "when he puts his arms around me I feel like a horse."

"It's up to you to make him forget horses," I said.

As the picture went on, the romance kept pace. Each love scene became better than the one before. When *Children of Divorce* was ready for release the Hollywood firmament had a new star, named Gary Cooper.

You wouldn't believe how innocent a six-foot-three Montana lad could be. After this picture a young southerner, with good looks, good connections, and a wonderful line of gab, got hold of Cooper. He was with him constantly; borrowed his car among other things. Not until two years had passed did Coop find out that he was "one of the boys," and the implications thereof. In Montana they didn't have fellows like that; this was the first he'd ever met up with.

The romance with Clara Bow folded, and Coop became attached to Lupe Velez, who relaxed him even more than Clara had.

He bought her an eagle for a pet—just for the hell of it. Lupe yelled, "Not even a bird should live alone; it's against Nature!" So Coop went to Catalina Island, climbed the crags, and found the eagle a companion. He was a mass of digs and scratches, but Lupe's eagle was fixed up; at least until the birds flew at each other with intent to kill and somebody discovered they were of the same sex.

Lupe bought a house complete with swimming pool, but she didn't like the color of the pool, so she got some bright blue paint and put Coop to work. As they toiled over that paint job their screams of laughter could be heard all over Beverly Hills.

But Time marched on, and so did Coop. When Lupe became too demanding, his next stop was the Countess Dorothy di Frasso, who found our town a virgin pasture for her type of worldliness. She mixed titles with prize fighters, and motion-picture stars with babes of the evening. Her food and liquor were of top quality, even though some of her guests

weren't, and her music had that old beat-beat of the jungle.

At one party, knowing well the habits and proclivities of her guests, Dorothy arranged a recording machine under the sofa in her front hall, hoping to pick up some spicy tidbits from her unsuspecting friends.

But the tables were turned. All unknowing, Jack Barrymore led his bride, Elaine Barrie, to the sofa, and proceeded to give her the low-down and unofficial rating of every star who came through the front door, interspersed with a seasoning of salty reminiscences of their charming hostess.

Finally Di Frasso got the lovebirds off her hot seat, took the record to her bedroom, and called in her pals for a playback. A few revolutions were enough. Dorothy smashed the record before it could go the distance. It was shattered into a thousand bits, and thus ended another beautiful friendship.

Di Frasso latched into Coop when he was worn out from too many pictures, too much Lupe, and too much living. He was dead tired and his physician ordered a long sea voyage.

The countess figured a safari to Africa would be about what the doctor ordered. Coop was too exhausted to say no. He wanted to get on a slow boat that would carry him halfway round the world, so he went to Italy, thence to Africa.

The safari over, the countess introduced him to the so-called International Set.

Coop didn't get back to simple living until his eye fell on a little girl named Sandra Shaw, who arrived in town with an old nurse and a big dog. Sandra had set her sights on the movies, and her mother thought the best protection would be a nurse and a dog. Sandra had been to Hollywood before. She and her mother lived for a time at the old Hollywood Hotel when I was there. That was before Mama married Paul Shields of Wall Street and was known thereafter as a member of New York's Four Hundred.

Coop and Sandra got married; then she used her right name, Veronica Balfe. The day after they returned from their honeymoon I watched Di Frasso stand at their luncheon table at the old Vendome for nearly an hour before she was invited by Coop to sit down. On a leash she had a pet dog he'd given her, and was full of reminiscences. The new bridegroom wanted no part of these narratives, but Di Frasso talked and Rocky listened, and learned much she hadn't known before.

The Coopers had almost seventeen years of happy marriage before they separated. Both liked the great outdoors and were particularly fond of skiing.

In 1942, I made half a dozen short subjects for release in

movie theaters. They turned out fairly good, too. When the Coopers joined Ernest Hemingway and his then-wife Martha Gellhorn at Sun Valley, I decided I had to get that quartet in a movie short, so I sent my cameraman up to shoot the works.

The Coopers were perfectly willing, but Hemingway balked. "Why should I pose for some lousy Hollywood columnist I've never even seen!" were his words—or thereabouts.

Coop said, "Aw, come on; she's an okay girl. I know her very well. You might like it."

With that Hemingway turned mulish and put his foot down. The cameraman telephoned me for orders.

"Try following him around when he goes out shooting," I said. "Maybe you can steal some shots when he's not noticing."

This the cameraman did. When Hemingway, on a ledge in a canyon, had a perfect bead on some birds, my man started grinding away. But the noise frightened the birds, the shot went wild, all but getting my cameraman in the head, and a string of oaths hit the mark. You could have heard in Hollywood Hemingway swearing in Sun Valley.

That was enough for my man. He packed up. But at the last moment he decided to stay overnight and rest his nerves. He was an old Navy man, and when his nerves got upset, instead of lifting the elbow he was in the habit of lifting a pair of knitting needles. So he got out a ball of red wool and sat down in the lobby to calm himself.

An hour or so later Hemingway happened to come by. He saw a man sitting there knitting—knit one, purl two, knit one—— Hemingway could hardly believe what he saw.

"What the hell you think you're doing?" he asked finally.

No answer.

"I *said,* what the hell're you doing?"

"Knitting. Whassa matter—can't you see?"

"Knitting? Knitting what?"

"A cap. Anything more you'd like to know, *Mister* Hemingway?"

The great author began to laugh. He threw back his head and bellowed. My man kept right on knitting, his chin way out.

"Aw, come on," said Hemingway. "Don't be an old sorehead. Come on out with us tomorrow. You can get all the pictures you bloody well want."

Later Ernest Hemingway told someone that he was very much surprised to see himself in a thing called *Hedda Hopper's Hollywood.*

17

Hollywood saluted the Infantry with *The Big Parade,* and in 1927 the Air Force got a low bow with *Wings.* I had a few weeks' work playing Buddy Rogers' mother in this early epic of the skies.

A young man named Howard Hughes—a long, lanky, taciturn fellow whom Hollywood never has understood because he's disinterested in personal publicity—was working on a picture titled *Hell's Angels.* Nobody knew much about it; nor did Hollywood care.

But the big aviation news of '27 was Charles A. Lindbergh. After his breath-taking flight across the Atlantic, he came to Los Angeles and was given a party at the Ambassador Hotel, with Marion Davies as hostess.

I received an invitation, which I declined. Bill and my faithful cook Dagmar were wild to get a glimpse of Lindy, so I decided to stick with them on the sidelines.

When we pushed our way into the hotel lobby we learned that Lindbergh was upstairs talking to Mr. Hearst. He was an hour late for his own party, so we waited impatiently with the crowd.

Marion Davies' secretary, "Bill" Williams, happened by, spied me, and yelled, "Hey! You belong inside." I shook my head and pointed to my companions.

"Bring 'em along." I needed no more urging. The room was packed with stars, so I grabbed a small table and sat with my back to the crowd so Bill and Dagmar could watch the celebrities. To Dagmar it was better than a coronation.

When Lindy arrived, I put Bill in my place in the receiving line to shake the hero's hand, and for twenty-four hours couldn't get my son to wash his hands. I didn't blame him; I felt the same way. My admiration for Lindy has never diminished, even when he was purged by F.D.R. I believed Lindbergh, not our President.

I happened to mention this incident at the Ambassador to Jimmy Stewart not long ago. "I've got a story about him I've never told anyone," Jimmy said. "I was attending Princeton University when his baby was kidnaped. The night of

the kidnaping was clear and cold. There was a big fire in the city of Princeton. Sirens, fire apparatus, boys in cars following the engines and blowing their horns made a terrific din —the noise could be heard for miles.

"I've always believed that the guy who snatched the baby heard that racket, thought the police were on his trail, lost his head, and killed the child."

Could be.

My son was growing up fast. During his four years at the Catalina Island School for Boys, the New York Giants spent a spring training season at Catalina. Lads from the school were invited to play against the Giants rookies. Bill, a member of the school team, played pretty well, and was asked by the Giants manager if he wouldn't like to play professional baseball when he'd finished his education. Bill never mentioned the incident to me until he was grown. What a natural vocation for the son of the Giants number-one fan, who made the mighty *Casey* famous.

During vacations Bill went daily to the Santa Monica Beach Club for swimming and volleyball. Joel McCrea, a Greek god to all the young fry at the club, spent hours teaching the kids to swim—training that was to be invaluable to my son during World War II when he served in the South Pacific with Underwater Demolition Team No. 10. Those were the lads who had to swim underwater with eighty pounds of explosives on their backs and blew up coral reefs and other obstructions so our G.I.s could land on Japanese-held islands.

Bill trained for this service at the Catalina Island School, which was closed by order of the War Department and turned into a training camp for the Frogmen. It was strange, but, Bill felt, a good omen, that he was given the same room he had occupied when he was twelve years of age.

Stranger than fiction, too, was the reunion of the Choates and Hoppers during World War II. Arthur Osgood Choate, grandson of Joseph H. Choate (godfather of De Wolf Hopper), was Bill's commanding officer in the South Pacific all during the war.

Panic rocked our town back on its heels with a jolting right to the jaw in 1927. Sound came into pictures—to stay.

The year before, the musical setting of *Don Juan* had been synchronized. But in the late summer of '27 things happened to scare the daylights out of Hollywood.

There had been time to see the handwriting on the wall.

People had been around the studios trying to drum up business for a gimmick which would record actors' lines on wax, to be synchronized with film for projection. The wisenheimers laughed it off. "You know how much it would cost to wire the theaters for the use of this?" they demanded of the prospectors.

"You'll come to it," said the gimmick salesmen. Fox was already in the theaters with Movietone News, using sound.

"Ha! Ha! It'll be a cold day——"

On the contrary, it was a hot day. Blood pressures hit the sky. The Warner boys decided to take the leap to the new process, called Vitaphone. They were in financial trouble; they weren't the most stabilized company in Hollywood. On the other hand, they had been successful with synchronization for *Don Juan*.

They got together on an awful story, *The Jazz Singer*, put their faith in their well-known May McEvoy, and hired Al Jolson, who was big in musical comedy. What was smarter still, Warners secured the patents for the sound.

The boys didn't have enough cash to pay Jolson his salary, and instead persuaded him to take a chunk of stock. Their blood pressure would have exploded if they'd realized they were putting the foundation of his fortune into his hands.

Hollywood producers had, and have, never lost any love over the Warner Brothers. When *The Jazz Singer* made them a million dollars it didn't improve things for their competitors to be forced to lease from them the patents which were wrecking silent stars right and left. However, their control of sound allowed the four brothers to take out a five-million-dollar annuity apiece.

When I said my prayers at night I put in, "Thank you, God, for my stage training." Neither producers nor many silent players had any backlog of theater training to draw on. Voice teachers and singing coaches sprang up like locusts. Some of the oldest methods of voice placing and projection known to man were trotted out. But you have to hand it to them; they tried everything—ancient, modern, even methods in embryo.

The crying need was for some good dialogue writers, and for men with sense enough left to give silent stars a chance to find out if they could speak in this new medium. In our town, though, common sense has no market value. We do everything the hard way.

Up to that time producers had looked down their noses at stage actors. Overnight, people like Claudette Colbert, Bob Montgomery, Edward G. Robinson, Freddie March,

Jeanette MacDonald, Maurice Chevalier, Ann Harding, Larry Tibbett, Grace Moore, and the Barrymores could name any price and get it.

Everybody, including me, was making money on the stock exchange. You'd put in ten bucks and take out one hundred dollars. Where had I been all my life? I turned over my life savings and a good chunk of current earnings to Eliot Gibbons and said, "Make me some of that capital appreciation." Like a little man, he did so for months.

He did so well by me that when Frances Marion said, "Let's take Caroline (her niece) and go to Europe," I said, "By golly, let's!" I even had enough money to splurge on new glad rags and pay for my end of the trip.

We embarked on that tour in style. In New York there were interviews and farewell parties. Frances' husband, Fred Thompson, saw us off from Pasadena with trees of orchids and had more waiting for us in New York. He couldn't go with us but sure bade us a fine bon voyage.

Frances never went anywhere without cables following her with offers of writing assignments. Sure enough, when we got to Paris there was a message from Lillian Gish demanding our immediate presence at Max Reinhardt's palace in Salzburg to consult with the master about writing *The Miracle* for the movies, in which Lillian was to star.

But Frances had decided we were to go on the Grand Tour by motor. The longest car in Paris had been hired and a courier engaged. We could afford it. Frances had been getting five thousand a week for years, and I was getting daily cables that ran sweetly: "Made you three thousand. Shall I send it or put it in your bank account?" Being the frugal type, I'd cable back: "In the bank."

So we let Lillian whistle.

The tour became a happy highlight. We roamed battlefields and cathedrals, spent a week end at Villa d'Este on Lake Como. There I ran into Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes and his wife. In fact, I ran head on into the justice in the corridor while on my way to the bathroom. He was busting out with judicial dignity and didn't unbend long enough to say even, "Sorry."

Down in Venice we happened in on a fete day. Poor little King Victor Emmanuel III was in attendance, the banners flying. Mussolini had not quite gained complete control and the King's Guard and companies of soldiers were along with him. The square was like a medieval pageant come to life.

Frances came down with a migraine headache. Her niece

was occupied in mooning over a young man she'd met on the boat. So for two days alone, I lived! From one art gallery to another; from one palazzo to another; in and out of half the gondolas on the Grand Canal.

We finally arrived in Salzburg and put up at a hotel. Caroline sped off to rejoin her young man, and Frances and I got a bid to Max Reinhardt's palace for dinner.

The palace, exquisite in its proportions and furnishings, had been bought by Reinhardt shortly after the end of World War I. When Hitler came into power, the Nazis took it over. It has since been returned to the remaining members of the Reinhardt family: the widow, Helene Thimig, and Max's two sons, Gottfried and Wolfgang. The former is a producer, director, and writer at MGM; the latter, a producer and assistant to David Selznick.

The castle is now used for a school run by Harvard graduates. Two pupils from each country in Europe—with the exception of those behind the Iron Curtain—make up the student body. It must be a charming place in which to study, but I imagine the students are a little rough on the palace.

The beauty of the palace was a perfect background for D. W. Griffith's great silent star Lillian Gish, and she was enjoying herself thoroughly. Her blond hair a nimbus round her face and down her back, Lillian was dressed in an accordion-pleated cerulean-blue tunic caught with a jeweled belt at the waist. She looked exactly like a Botticelli come to life.

The great Reinhardt was gracious, and we were spared embarrassment by his interpreter Helene Thimig, who later became the second Mrs. Reinhardt.

Dinner was lamb stew, rice pudding, and beer! We had come all that distance for such food! We discovered why. Ten days before, when they'd wanted us, they'd lived high on the hog—caviar, champagne, with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra to serenade the guests, who included Joe Schenck, vice-president of 20th Century-Fox, and Joe Kennedy, later to be Ambassador to England. Now we were getting leftovers.

Frances stayed after dinner to go over the story idea of *The Miracle*. I went back to the hotel, picked up our car, and had myself a moonlight tour of Salzburg. A lovelier place in the moonlight I have never seen. It is not bad in the daytime either!

The next day we returned to the castle and lunched with a German baron and his exquisite wife. After lunch, when Lillian and Max were trying to persuade Frances that what the screen needed was another miracle, I strolled in the

garden with the baron, who said, "My wife and I met Mr. Schenck when he was here ten days ago. He said if she came to Hollywood he would put her in movies. What do you think?"

"Your wife is very beautiful. Do you think she would succeed in becoming an actress?"

"Ah," he said, "she would succeed at anything."

"You love her very much, don't you?"

"More than anything else in the world."

"Then my advice is never let her go to Hollywood."

In the late afternoon there was an interruption. Hugo von Hofmannsthal, who wrote the libretto to Richard Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier,* came in with his composer to play the music for his new play *The Great World Theater,* which Reinhardt had agreed to produce. We all gathered in the blue music room while the composer and Von Hofmannsthal poured out words and melody.

The play never reached America. Not long after its production in Germany, the author's son committed suicide; and while dressing for the funeral, Von Hofmannsthal dropped dead. A tragic ending to one of the most melodic afternoons of my life.

That afternoon in Reinhardt's palace I was in the mood for music. On the ship I'd met one of the handsomest Americans I'd ever seen, a painter. Having fallen completely under his spell, I was ready to dream a while.

I've always wondered how it happened that we didn't take him along with us on the tour. I would have had even happier memories than I have now. We never thought to invite him.

However, he was still in Paris when we returned. So we had two heavenly weeks in the most beautiful city in the world. Nowadays when I go to Paris I make first for the Sacré-Cœur. The artist showed it to me the first time. From its steps the view of the city of Paris is magic indeed.

The young man had a commission to paint a ballroom in London. He flew to England; after we'd gathered up Caroline we flew after him. The artist showed me London as few Americans ever see it.

Frances' immediate project was a dog. She searched the town until she found an English bulldog with a pedigree as long as your arm. Her prized great Dane had died before we left on the trip, and she had to take a bulldog back to Fred.

Well, the day we left London, complete with this blue-blooded representative, we received a show of respect the like

of which would be rated by General Ike Eisenhower. Porters, bellboys, doormen, bobbies, everyone turned out to bid farewell to one of their own—an English bulldog. The pooch got the idea that he was a lap dog, and that ugly, snuffling specimen spent his time on the train ride to the boat chewing holes in my new dress.

While Frances rushed home to California, I stayed on in New York for a part in a new play titled *Tomorrow*. During rehearsals the thought crossed my mind that *Tomorrow* would never come, and I suspected that the play was not for me, though I'd rehearsed for ten days. According to Equity, though, I couldn't resign. I could get away only by being fired or if there was an accident.

We rehearsed for a month, then the accident happened. A prop airplane, rigged up to fly with two men in it across the stage, fell. One fellow's back was broken; the other boy was seriously injured. I called up Bernie Baruch and he got his own doctors on that job fast for those boys. I got my release.

The play finally went on and ran a week, but I had fled to Hollywood. I had reached the safety of my own home when I got word that Fred Thompson was seriously ill.

The day before Christmas, Frances came from the hospital and told me how seriously. She'd been living in a room across the hall from his. "Won't you come and stay with me for an hour tomorrow night?" she begged me. No one expected a happy Christmas.

After taking Bill with me to deliver our presents, I dropped him off at home and made tracks to the hospital.

As I got off the elevator on the floor where Fred was, I heard a horrible sound: hard, labored breathing. I was told it came from Fred's room. And there seemed to be much confusion in the corridor—people milling around, chatting nonchalantly, as though they didn't hear this dreadful sound. Friends of Fred's, I was told.

I found Frances in her room across the corridor. "What are all those people doing out there?" I demanded.

"They love him—I can't tell them to go. I think he knows his friends are outside; it must comfort him."

Then her friends started to congregate. Charlie and Virginia Farrell were taken in to see Fred. Marie Dressler barged in like a schooner under full sail. "I'll stay the night," she said firmly. Frances gave me a sick look and shook her head. She and I both knew that if Marie said she was going to stay, she'd stay. Nothing short of death would stop her.

"Would you like to see Fred?" Frances asked me vaguely.

I went into his room. I knew this man was dying, although I'd never seen a person near death before.

As we returned to the corridor the doctor arrived. "What are all these people doing here?" he inquired. Then, without waiting for an answer, he asked me to help clear them out.

"I can do it all, except for one person," I said. "Marie Dressler. We won't be able to budge her."

"Leave that to me!" he snapped.

After clearing the corridor, I put on my coat and hat and said good night to Frances. Marie said to me, "I'm staying. The doctor asked me to."

"Oh, fine," I said, walking slowly to the elevator.

Before I got there Marie called out, "Wait for me, Hedda. I'll go with you."

She'd sent her chauffeur home and got reluctantly into my jalopy. We had no conversation on the way home; I was too full of what I'd seen to talk, and was suffering for Frances, who didn't seem to comprehend that the end was near.

I dropped Marie at her house. As I was driving into my garage some flash, intuition, some message from the spirit world—call it what you will—made me back out of the driveway and go back to the hospital at top speed.

As I walked through the front door a sister exclaimed softly, "Oh, I'm so glad you've come! Mr. Thompson just died."

Frances was upstairs with the doctor. She couldn't fully realize what had happened. I said I'd take her home and asked the doctor to give me some sleeping pills for her.

We drove past mile on mile of beautifully decorated and lighted Christmas trees, under a perfect full moon, then up the long, dangerous, winding hillside road to Frances' home, which she and Fred had fashioned out of seventeen barren acres.

We assembled the servants and broke the sad news to them. Then I got Frances into bed and gave her the sleeping pills. "Will you sleep in Fred's bed, here next to mine?" she mumbled.

Out on the sleeping porch that English bulldog was snuffling its head off.

I got between the sheets and, after tossing and turning for a long time, dropped off into a doze. Then I felt hands catch hold of me and try to push me out of bed. If you've read this far, you know I'm not superstitious. I forced myself to go back to sleep.

The same thing happened again.

The pills had done their work, and Frances was still fast asleep. I sat up in bed. Not even pills could have put me back to sleep. Those hands trying to push me out of that bed, I'm certain, were the spirit hands of Fred Thompson.

That was our Christmas—the most frightening night of my life. Tragedy at that season magnified it beyond endurance. It was a night neither Frances nor I would ever forget.

After Fred's death Frances knew she couldn't keep up such a big establishment alone and asked me to find a buyer for her hilltop. It was just my luck that I did. I was amazed that her price of four hundred and fifty thousand dollars was met, and ecstatically phoned her at San Simeon, where she was visiting Marion Davies and William Randolph Hearst. Living in that cradle of luxury had changed Frances' perspective. After I'd told her about finding a buyer at her price, she said, "You know, I've changed my mind. I don't believe I want to sell it."

I knew it was hopeless to argue. "All right," I said. "If that's the way you feel. I'm sorry. See you when you return." Then I put in another telephone call to San Simeon, this time for Mr. Hearst.

I told him about the incident and asked if he couldn't help me, more for Frances' sake than my own, although it was important to me too. "Why, it's sheer madness," he said. "She'll never get anywhere near that price again. I'll see what I can do."

Half an hour later Frances phoned me and said, "You know, I've been thinking about that offer. I believe I ought to take it. When did the man say he could go into escrow?"

"Day after tomorrow."

"Well, I'll have to leave the ranch a little earlier than I had expected, but I'll be there."

We met William Barnes, the man who was so careless with his money, in a Beverly Hills bank. The down payment was two hundred thousand dollars. Reaching into his hip pocket, Barnes pulled out a roll of bills and checks which would have plugged up the biggest rathole. Around it was a rubber band. Peeling off five checks, he threw them on the banker's desk and said, "I guess this will cover it."

I picked them up. The amount on each was fifty thousand dollars. Some had been dated six months before. My hand trembled as I held the fifth one out to him and said, "Mr. Barnes, I believe you've given me one too many."

He looked at it. "So I have," he said. Then he took the

check, replaced the band, shoved the roll in his hip pocket, and said, "Go on with the deal."

Frances also sold the bulldog we'd imported from England. Len Hanna, of Cleveland, decided he had to own the beast. He could see the brute being papa to a best of breed. Even Fanny couldn't resist the thousand-dollar offer.

Frances didn't know the dog had been altered. Len found out when he got it home to Cleveland.

Before Frances moved out of her house I suggested that we give a joint farewell party. She agreed. We invited two hundred and fifty people, and when Marie Dressler heard of it she said, "I must be one of the hostesses."

It was a gala event, and I must say we did it up proud. The following day the party got quite a write-up in the local papers. Frances and I were dumfounded at one story which read: "Miss Marie Dressler, the great motion-picture star, gave a farewell luncheon party for her dearest friend, Miss Frances Marion, who is leaving her hilltop home to take up residence at a smaller place."

The seventy-five-hundred-dollar commission I got for selling the place was deposited in the same bank that handled the sale. Three months after the transaction the bank went bust and I lost every cent.

18

Fortunately someone remembered that Hedda Hopper had been on the stage and possessed a pair of vocal cords; so when movies started speaking their piece, I got a contract at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. And my son got his first girl.

Bill had asked to spend the summer on the desert with John Barry, a friend of ours who had bought a cattle ranch at Twenty-Nine Palms. Barry afterward started a newspaper in Victorville, California. John was not only willing but anxious to have Bill as a helper and a paying guest; so away they went, after I extracted a promise from Bill to write what little news there was at least once a week.

By the tone of his letters, I knew he was having the time of his life. There were two or three real cowboys on the place, and he helped round up the cattle and drive the calves to market. I went ahead with my acting without worrying about him, until a letter arrived that had me gasping for air.

Bill wrote me all about the desert belle—her pretty new dress, her permanent wave, and her father, the sheriff—and ended up with: "You won't know your son. She's teaching me to dance, *and other pleasant things.*"

It was a steaming-hot day in July, but when I learned that John Barry was in town I phoned him and asked if he'd take me along when he went back to the ranch. I said nothing about the letter.

We arrived at sunset. What they called "a ranch" looked like a prospector's shack. The bunkhouse was made of corrugated iron with a roof to match. I found Bill washing behind his ears, slicking his hair down, shining his boots, and getting ready for a big Saturday night. He was quite surprised to see Mother, and wasn't at all pleased when I said, "I'd like to go along to the dance and meet your Mata Hari."

"Aw, Mother," he said, "she's an awfully sweet girl, but I don't think she'd like to meet you."

Well! I went. I met her. Bill was right. She was a sweet girl. She had done more for him in a couple of months than I'd been able to do all those years. He felt right at home with her and her folks, and with the old sourdough who played the fiddle. After seeing them do the first few twirls around the old barn, I went outside and sat in the truck to cool off my fevered brow and spent the rest of the evening baby-sitting with the ranchers' children so Mama and Papa could go in and have a whirl at a square dance.

Nothing before or since has ever tickled my funny bone so much as my mad dash to the desert to save my son from a fate worse than death. If I'd had the wit of a sparrow, I'd have known that if they were doing anything wrong, Bill never would have written to me about her. But you know how that maternal instinct affects people.

The ride before the fall. The year—1929. Americans were reading Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* when the *Graf Zeppelin* made its first round-the-world commercial flight. Preston Sturges' *Strictly Dishonorable* was a hit on Broadway, and moviegoers got a look at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's first *Broadway Melody.*

Metro was the most exciting place in town that year. We never wanted to go home. After the day's work was done, we all gathered either in Larry Tibbett's dressing room or on the landing outside, to listen to him rehearse his numbers for *The Rogue Song.*

Larry's wife Grace was extremely jealous of him. I remem-

ber standing beside him at the upright piano in his dressing room. Larry had his arm about me; the room was full of happy people. The door at the other end opened suddenly, Grace stuck her head in, saw a woman with Larry, slammed the door and went rocketing off. I caught up with her.

"What's the matter with you?" I asked.

"That woman—hugging Larry's arm——"

"Who do you think it was?"

That threw her off balance. "Was it you?" she asked. She then went back with me and joined the others.

We even went to the studio on Sundays when Larry did his numbers. One number had a choral group of eighty Negroes. I'm a pushover for the melting lilt of their voices, and the day that number was done, fifty of us spent the whole day listening.

However, Greta Garbo was the most exciting personality on the lot. Her name still seems to light a torch in the minds of everybody who hears it.

Maurice Stiller brought her to Hollywood after she had done a film with him in Sweden. She was his protégée, and there was an understanding that Garbo was to have a contract with Stiller at MGM.

In 1926 Lillian Gish brought a Russian cameraman, whose name I've forgotten, to Hollywood from the East.

Nobody had seen the work of the Russian. The studio saw some trick slides with which he was said to get effects. They had to have more than that. He was asked to make tests.

Shucks, you couldn't ask the great Miss Gish to make tests! "Whom shall we get?" studio representatives asked each other. Some bright boy piped up, "That big Swede's been sitting around a long time. Why don't you let her earn some of that two hundred and fifty dollars a week?"

So for three days Greta Garbo sat on a high stool while the unknown Russian made tests of her.

A director was looking at water scenes to use in his picture *The Torrent* when, accidentally, the tests using Garbo were cut in. His producer was sitting beside him. Apologizing nervously, he stopped the projection. "No, go ahead," said the director, "I want to see something."

When they'd been run through once, he called for them to be run again, then jumped up and ran to the front office. "I want that girl—the one in the tests. I want her for *The Torrent*."

The front office had been ready to send Garbo back to Sweden, where such minor talent belonged, and the director

was called all kinds of a damn fool. "I want her," he said stubbornly.

He got her. She was cast opposite Ricardo Cortez, and when the picture was released a new comet streamed across the picture sky. She played in *The Temptress* with Antonio Moreno and Lionel Barrymore, but found her ideal foil when she made *Flesh and the Devil* with Jack Gilbert.

Jack fell in love with Garbo. It would have been hard not to do so. Lionel Barrymore, in his book *We Barrymores*, says she "had the true nimbus of greatness; but she was difficult to understand . . . She was knowable through the usual amenities . . . I would have attempted some sort of homey acquaintance save for the fact, regrettable for me, that it took me at least two days to emerge from the spell she always cast by her great acting. . . ."

Jack Gilbert begged Garbo in vain to marry him. He even had a suite of rooms arranged in his house for her. According to hearsay, the black marble bathroom set him back fifteen thousand dollars. When it was finished he showed it to her. Later he described how she put her slender, beautiful hands over her eyes and murmured. "The marble—it is too shiny——" Jack said he brought in workmen with chisels, who fluted the marble to take the shine off.

Gilbert was so hurt over Garbo's refusal to marry him that when the famous stage star Ina Claire came to town to make a picture, he began wooing her like mad almost the minute he met her.

In the beginning I think the idea was to make Garbo jealous, but he misjudged the distance. I don't believe Garbo has ever been jealous of anybody or anything in her whole life. Perhaps she was as surprised as the rest of us, therefore, when we got the news that Ina and Jack had eloped to Las Vegas.

In Ina's wedding pictures she carried a bouquet of wilted flowers. I asked about them the day she returned to town. "Weren't they awful?" she said. "Just as we were about to start the ceremony a little man came up from behind and pushed them into my hand. It would have been rude to refuse. When it was over, I learned he was the town undertaker and didn't think it proper for a bride to be married without flowers."

The day the wedding story broke I happened to catch a ride from my dressing room to the stage in the car usually reserved for Garbo.

"Did she say anything about Jack's wedding?" I asked the driver.

"I said to her this morning, 'Surprised at the news in the paper?' You know what she did? She burst out laughing and said, 'It is so sil-ly!' "

She was right. It was so silly. That marriage was doomed from the beginning.

The most surprised person of all was Ina's fiancé, Gene Markey, who was in mid-continent on the way from New York to Hollywood to begin a writing contract at Columbia when he got the bad news. A man of less iron would have got off the train, canceled his contract by wire, and beat it back to New York. Gene came on along and registered at the Hollywood Roosevelt. The same night our first Academy Awards dinner was scheduled—in the same hotel.

I had made up a party for it and called Gene to invite him along.

"I couldn't," he said. "I just couldn't."

"Okay, Gene, but remember you've got to face the town anyway—why not do it all in one fell swoop? You'll be among friends; all the stars and important people in town will attend. I'd like to get a look at their faces when you're handed to them as the man Ina left at the post. Ina and Jack won't have the face to appear. You can say anything you like. It might be fun. You should get a better write-up in the morning papers than the awards."

"Give me half an hour to think about it," he said.

In half an hour the phone rang. "Okay" was his answer.

Gene's entrance that night was a triumph. He missed his calling. Markey could have been an actor, with that bright smile, his equally bright wit, the way he could turn a phrase to his own advantage. He won everybody. The next day he got as much play in the papers as Mary Pickford, who won the Oscar for *Coquette*.

I knew this would bring a phone call from Ina Claire Gilbert. It did. "Hedda, will you bring Gene up to the house and take Jack out to the pool, or somewhere, while I apologize to Gene?"

Being the handy old family door mat that I was, I did. After Ina had had an hour to talk things over with Gene, Jack, sweating, burst back into the room from the tennis court. Ina introduced him, and the men hit it off right from the start and became friends!

Gene made out all right. First he married Joan Bennett and fathered a beautiful daughter for her. They divorced and he married Hedy Lamarr. No child this time, so Hedy adopted one. They divorced, and Gene married the Perfect Wife, Myrna Loy. After a while they divorced.

"Gene," I said one day, "when what you really want is a wife, why do you keep on marrying picture stars?"

Smiling faintly, he said, "I just keep on trying—somewhere in this world there must be a woman in whom are combined all the qualities I'm looking for."

"Beauty, wife, mistress, mother, star rating—Gene, you're looking for something not yet born on this planet."

"Maybe so," he said with a twinkle in his eye, "but I have a lot of fun looking."

It was strange that one of Gene's wives, Myrna Loy, got her big break in an Ina Claire picture. In 1931, Ina came to Hollywood to star in *Rebound* with Bobby Ames. She and director Edward H. Griffith searched for weeks to find an attractive girl capable of taking a beau away from Ina in the film. Griffith had almost despaired until he tested a girl who had been in many B pictures.

I was with Ina and Griffith in the projection room when the test was run. Ina scoffed, "You don't think 'Sunbonnet Sue' there could take a man away from *me*, do you?"

Griffith said, "I don't know. But this is Friday—we start Monday. Unless you come up with someone better, we'll have to take the chance. That's an order from the front office."

Sure enough, when we went to work on Monday morning "Sunbonnet Sue," as Ina dubbed Myrna, was there. Her welcome wasn't what you'd call hearty—except from E.H. Having taken the chance, he was determined she'd make good.

She sure did. She went on to become one of Metro's greatest money-makers and the screen's perfect wife. Myrna Loy must have been a perfect wife, too, because so far she's had four husbands, all important. After Gene Markey came Arthur Hornblow, Jr., then followed John Hertz, and now Howland Sergeant of the State Department.

Myrna didn't outact Ina—I don't believe anybody could—but she was fresh and exactly what the part called for, notwithstanding that for years she'd been cast as slinky, sultry sirens in B pictures for Columbia. All of which had got her exactly nowhere, probably for the good reason that she was fundamentally a sweet, natural girl.

I watched Jack Gilbert being destroyed on the sound stage by one man, Lionel Barrymore, who took time out from his acting to direct Jack's first talking picture, *His Glorious Night*. Ironic title.

Talking pictures had to be approached cautiously. Lionel

had plenty of experience on the stage; Gilbert had none.

By the time sound came in, "love" was a comedy word. Use it too freely and you got a belly laugh. Whether by diabolical intent or careless accident I'll never know, but Jack's very first speech in *His Glorious Night* was "I love you, I love you, I love you."

Jack was young and virile, and he was getting five thousand dollars a week. He was handsome, but his face just didn't fit those words. When sound came on the screen from his lips, a strange meeting took place between his nose and mouth which made him look more like a parrot than a lover. In silent pictures you never noticed.

It was unfortunate, too, that during the picture Lionel was in physical misery. He had a bad hip and took drugs to ease the pain. Around 4 P.M., when he'd inch himself out of his chair, it took a good minute before he could start the locomotion of his legs.

The picture finished, Jack and Ina took off on a battling honeymoon. They separated so many times that they became international news, but always got together again and eventually returned on the same boat.

They were in mid-ocean when the stock market crashed. Gilbert had stocks on margin—as who didn't? His banker and his business manager were unable to reach him by telephone and, like millions of other Americans, Jack lost everything.

Ina told me the story later.

Jack arrived in New York flat broke. But, ever an optimistic soul, he thought, "At least I've got my new contract." Metro thought so highly of him they'd promised to build a dressing-room bungalow for him on the lot. So he decided to go see his picture, which happened to be opening that day at the Capitol Theatre on Broadway. He hadn't seen it previewed before leaving for Europe.

He settled down to enjoy himself on the screen. The title appeared, the credits, the picture started. Gilbert appeared with the leading lady, spoke his opening line—"I love you, I love you, I love you"—whereupon the audience broke into howls of laughter!

Jack never waited to see the rest. Chin tucked down in his collar, hat pulled over his eyes, he rushed out of the theater, caught a train for California—now not only broke but the biggest flop on the lot.

He went to MGM. There was his new bungalow, all bright and shiny; but the Big Boys, those fair-weather friends for whom he'd made millions, just didn't seem to quite recog-

nize him, didn't quite meet his eye when he came toward them. This made Jack roaring mad. He'd damned well finish out his contract, no matter what stinkers they put him in. And they sure gave him some cats and dogs!

After Jack and Ina were divorced, he paid court to Lupe Velez. They scooted off to Europe together and had a wonderful time.

The little Mexican Lupe had attracted favorable attention from Doug Fairbanks, who had put her in one of his pictures. On location one day a horse bit her. Lupe turned around and bit the horse. That was the kind of a girl she was. That bite put her on front pages.

After returning from England with Jack, she came into my dressing room. "Hedda," she said, "I'm gonna have a heart-to-heart talk with you."

"Shoot!"

"Well, you've known me for years. You've known Jack too. You know I'm no lady. People like me, though, just the same. I like people, too. I like Jack. It seems I am able to make him happy. Together we did all right—even in England. All those lords and ladies entertained us—even a duke. Well, he was a little moth-eaten, but all the same he was a duke. Now what I want you to tell me is this: shall I marry Jack or shan't I?"

It wasn't much good to tell a girl like Lupe the one about locking the barn door after the horse has been stolen. I answered by asking a question.

"Lupe, what's the advantage of getting married? Tell me now, honestly."

She gave me a big hug and bounced out of the room. "Thanks," she called over her shoulder, "that's all I wanted to know."

She ran into Jack's bungalow yelling joyfully, "Hey, Jack, we don't have to get married——"

Life caught up, though, with our little Lupe. She fell in love with a man not good enough to dust off her shoes. When she discovered she was going to have a baby without the protection of marriage, she killed herself.

Taking her life was against the tenets of her religion. She couldn't be buried in consecrated ground, and was an outcast from Heaven and all the loving kindness of the Virgin Mother. To a girl like Lupe that was suffering indeed.

Greta Garbo repaid some of Jack Gilbert's heartbreak by insisting that he play opposite her in *Queen Christina*, though

this was long after his Metro contract was washed up; in fact, long after he was washed up in pictures.

When the story was agreed upon, many leading men were tested, among them Ricardo Cortez and Fredric March. But neither of them suited Garbo.

In desperation the studio cabled England and brought over Laurence Olivier. To economize on time, his measurements were cabled ahead so that his costumes would be ready when he arrived.

Meanwhile, though, Garbo walked into Louis B. Mayer's office and stated simply, "I want Jack Gilbert."

"That's the one thing I can't grant you," he replied.

Garbo never said a word, just turned around and walked out of the office.

Preparations for the start of the picture moved ahead. One day Garbo was notified that they were ready to begin.

"I'll come," she sent back word, "when Jack Gilbert is on the set." And, by golly, when he was, she did—and not before.

When Garbo was upset she would stride the full length of her dressing-room gallery; back and forth, back and forth, like some female Captain Bligh. At each dressing-room window along the gallery, fascinated eyes would follow.

Joan Crawford, who had the room next to mine, would dash in and whisper, "What do you suppose is wrong now?"

"How should I know?"

"Let's find out."

We never did. Garbo had no confidantes. She allowed no one to watch her act except the people in the immediate scene. Toward the end of her picture-making career her director Clarence Brown was doing his work from behind a screen—with two peepholes so he could watch the actress at work.

Once Arthur Brisbane came on her set. Garbo walked off. Not until she was informed that he had left would she come back. Calmly she explained, "I don't look over his shoulder when he's writing an editorial. If he wants to see me act, let him buy a ticket and go to the theater."

The silliest thing the studio ever did was to try to punish Garbo. Their plan backfired. When she refused to sign a new contract on *their* terms, they decided she must conform. To make her see things their way, they took the star part in her next picture away from her and gave it to Aileen Pringle. Garbo was ordered to play the maid.

She made no protest; even had the maid's costume fitted to her. Aileen prepared to start the picture, but those of us

who had been around a long time knew she would never finish it. Sure enough, the day before the picture was to start, the studio capitulated. Aileen went back to her minor roles and Garbo stepped into the place reserved for her.

Things started rosy for me that year of 1929. I had a contract at a good salary and was making money in the stock market.

I heard the shocking news over the radio before receiving a telephone call from my broker, Eliot Gibbons, who said, "It's a washout, Hedda—everything's gone. You haven't a penny. I'm sorry. If it's any consolation, the boat you're in is crowded."

It was no consolation.

Then I did something I haven't been able to explain. I walked to the bookshelves, found my *Oxford Book of English Verse*, went to my bedroom, locked the door, sat down, thumbed through the pages till I came to *Ode to a Skylark* and read it straight through.

I read it through six times until it began making sense in my mixed-up brain. The seventh time I enjoyed it. As I put the book down in my lap the telephone rang. Marion Davies was on the line. "Will you come up to Wyntoon for a visit?"

I said, "Thank you, Marion, I will." Hours later I was on the train.

Mr. Hearst's mother had built Wyntoon, which looked for all the world like a castle on the Rhine. It took shelter under the long shadow of Mount Shasta, and rising behind the house was a virgin forest of pine trees. The air had a special elixir, born in the bluish folds of snow-capped peaks.

The bedrooms were heated by open fireplaces, and you stayed snug abed until a houseboy built you a roaring fire. All day long truckloads of fabulous antiques arrived to replace others that didn't happen to suit the place or the mood of the owner.

The rear wall of the dining room was covered with thirteen tapestries, one on top of the other. The last one that came in was my favorite. It was pale blue, gray, and white, and featured a snow scene with sleighs, horses, and woods.

Wyntoon at that time could accommodate only a party of sixteen. I stayed there for two weeks.

The newspapers were always there. It was impossible to get away from the headlines. I read the names of many friends every day—a fall from a window. "It is not known whether he jumped or fell accidentally," was the way it was put.

Daily I went alone to walk beside the McCloud River, in some places narrow and peaceful, in others wider with a rushing tumble over scattered, glistening rocks, and always winding picturesquely along through lovely, still woods. I took my book of poetry along. I read and reread *Ode to a Skylark* as a person caught in a swirling current will cling to an alder branch rooted in the bank.

I don't know how a psychoanalyst would evaluate this; I only know that solitude and those verses gave me back my perspective. Marion and W.R. never knew why I spent so many hours alone; they never asked about my condition, and I never told them.

To this day I don't know how much I lost. I never let either my broker or my tax expert put it into words. It was material; I was alive and young enough to start again.

A private car brought us back to San Francisco, where we laid over for hours. Marion took the girls shopping at I. Magnin's, and before she finished all six of us had new coats, dresses, hats, shoes, gloves, and bags.

Soon after we reached home, Wyntoon burned down. A watchman had been left to guard things. Maybe a cigarette had fallen in the wrong place.

Wyntoon was rebuilt into a Bavarian village, with four or five houses arranged around a town square containing a statue brought over from Bavaria. Artisans came from Europe to carve the interiors; alfresco artists set scenes from fairy tales in the cement of one cottage, making it look for all the world like one in Nuremberg.

19

Christmas 1929 wasn't as flush as some I'd had in former years, but many of my friends still had their worldly possessions and continued being generous. Among them were Travis Banton and Adrian, two top designers in Hollywood.

Travis invited my son Bill and me to his house to help trim the family tree, and that's when I got a real insight into the generosity, or could it be called perspicacity, of some of our top stars. Travis' downstairs sitting room resembled an express office for outgoing packages, except that they were all incoming. He didn't wait until Christmas Day to open his packages; he was too curious to see what was in-

side. Those containing the mostest came from the most glamorous, Marlene Dietrich.

Travis worked at Paramount Studios, where Marlene, Claudette Colbert, Carole Lombard, Pola Negri, and Kay Francis competed for parts as sophisticated women of the world. The girls battled for Banton's most eye-filling designs, and they were battlers from away back. Each fought in her own way for the finest sables, mink, ermine, brocades, and headgear. Mae West was also in that stable of stars, but her clothes didn't interfere with the others. They were cast over a different mold. Mae had the same anatomical features as the other gals, but there were more of them.

Travis never could help it, but Dietrich always was his favorite, and she still is. One year I saw him unwrap twenty-two presents from Marlene, leading off with sapphire-and-diamond cuff links, a diamond-studded dress watch, a dozen service plates, Irish lace linens, crystal glasses, a dressing gown, and a kitchenful of copper pots and pans! Claudette and Carole were almost as generous. My eyes stood out of my head.

I must admit that Marlene's debt to Travis was much greater than that of the other girls, because when she first arrived here as the protégée of Josef Von Sternberg, after making *The Blue Angel* in Germany, she was anything but eye-filling except for that beautiful face. She looked more like a German hausfrau than a glamour queen. Her clothes were almost as funny as some I'd seen before leaving Altoona; only Marlene's cost more.

The first time I ever clapped eyes on her was at a tea party. When Travis caught sight of her I thought he'd faint dead away. Her gown of black satin was skintight over rather lumpy hips, with a train besides. And the bottom of the dress writhed with black ostrich feathers. Travis' took her in hand and together they made fashion history.

Marlene loved feathers—paradise, ostrich, egrets, even stuffed birds. Banton once made her an evening gown trimmed with four thousand dollars' worth of black paradise feathers. It was a knockout. Every star in town wanted to duplicate it, but they couldn't buy the feathers.

When an agent of the federal government swooped down on the studio and snatched away all the paradise feathers, I wondered if a certain star's jealousy hadn't got the better of her discretion. The agent said it was against the law to import or even buy paradise. Heaven forbid! These had been bought years before, but thereafter Marlene had to be content with the plumage of lesser and drabber birds.

Marlene was all women rolled into one—mother, daughter, siren, sweetheart, actress, slitch, homemaker, companion, and friend. And her introduction of slacks into our town is still on her conscience. Following her style, some of the funniest female shapes since Eve ate the apple laid themselves open to ridicule by squeezing all too solid flesh, and too much of it, into a pair of pants. No one ever wore them with Dietrich's distinction.

She set a style in kindness too. When a new star came to Paramount, Marlene was right there with a welcome. I was in Gladys Swarthout's dressing room when Dietrich, whose room was across the walk, came over, introduced herself, and held out a cake topped with white icing, gardenias, and a huge bow of white satin ribbon. She'd baked it for Gladys the night before. You'll have to admit that's a good method to win friends, but a star must know how to cook to use it.

Gary Cooper used to say, "You know, it's so hard for me to play love scenes with Marlene, because she always fills me so full of good food that when I should start to feel romantic I'm only sleepy."

"Have you noticed," I asked, "that you ate the food—she didn't? So she had the hungry look of the pursuer; you were only the recipient instead of the lover."

"My God!" groaned Gary. "I'll never eat any more of her cooking."

Marlene was the only star at Paramount who had a special kitchen built onto her dressing-room suite. I've seen her turn out an omelet while wearing a court dress and a white wig when she was playing *The Scarlet Empress* and never get a spot on her gown or a drop of perspiration on her pretty forehead.

She always knew what she wanted, and was never too busy to fight for it. Even for a costume ball that the Basil Rathbones were giving. When all of us were getting ourselves done up stinkin' for that party, Marlene elected to come as Leda and the Swan. For weeks sewing women worked on her costume.

She made up at home and went to the studio to put on the outfit, so that if it needed an extra stitch the sewing women would be right on hand.

She put it on, looked at herself, and let out a shriek. "Oh no! I ordered green eyes for the swan. I can't possibly wear a swan with eyes that match mine."

This was at 8 P.M. The sewing women fell to; the embroidered eyes were pulled out while the green ones were put in. Marlene had a party for herself and the seamstresses,

and five hours later made her entrance at the party. I always claimed the eyes did it—by design, not accident.

For that same party, I'd arranged something special too. I'd borrowed a queen's white brocaded costume from the studio, a jeweled crown to match, and a baby lamb to lead in on a leash.

I personally picked out the lamb and had it taught good manners. It was given a bubble bath and its hoofs were gilded. Then I had to work in a quickie picture until midnight and arrived at the party at 1 A.M. in a plain evening gown minus the lamb.

The Rathbones gave their party in the old Victor Hugo Restaurant in Beverly Hills. To accommodate all their guests they provided for two extra toilets—one for the ladies, the other for the gents.

Metro stars were never so generous with Adrian as the Paramount stars were with Travis Banton. Perhaps the MGM players—Norma Shearer, Joan Crawford, Myrna Loy, Garbo—were too sure of themselves. They never had to fight each other for a role, and Adrian cleverly made his designs fit each individual type.

Adrian always gave more than he got. He'd spend weeks selecting just the right gifts for his friends, then more weeks wrapping them so beautifully you never wanted to open the package.

Adrian was a perfectionist. He worked as hard over giving a party as he did over a dress design. When he started his annual Easter luncheon for friends, he asked me to come to a dress rehearsal and be his guinea pig. Luncheon was served to the two of us exactly as planned for the following day. Food, wine, service, table appointments—everything must be okayed before he gave the party.

We changed only one thing—the dessert. Adrian wanted pie. I said, "Too heavy for noontime." I tried to talk him out of using oversized coffee cups shaped like a baby's potty—an outlandish fancy that had caught his eye on a trip to New York. Luckily I didn't make my point. The potties were the hit of the luncheon, and everyone clamored to take one home as a souvenir. He had only one left when the party was over.

This perfection of detail on Adrian's part was matched by another perfectionist, General Douglas MacArthur. Mrs. Price, the lady who served as his official hostess before he married his present lovely wife, told me he did exactly the same thing before his state functions—not only to be sure that the

food was right but that the appointments and the service would run as smoothly as a battalion of trained soldiers on a dress parade.

Adrian's Christmas Eve parties weren't star-studded. They were filled with old tried-and-true friends, some of whom had fallen on bad days and some of whom could look forward to one party a year—Adrian's Christmas get-together.

One year his dining room, painted pine green with emerald taffeta draperies, was filled with white Christmas trees in ranks—the tallest ceiling-high, the smallest two feet. When the door was opened, you felt you were entering a white forest. The table centerpiece was a replica of the New York skyline done in crystal paperweights in all sizes and shapes.

The year when Janet Gaynor joined the Christmas party it was something out of *Arabian Nights*. When I hear women complain that their husbands become inattentive after marriage, Adrian's Christmases flash like a montage through my mind.

The Christmas before Janet's marriage to Adrian set a pattern which he has kept fresh year after year. Her presents ranged from twelve gowns, including a tea gown made of gold brocade so supple it could have been drawn through a wedding ring, to a sports costume designed for Sun Valley, a gold necklace trickling with pearls, to bracelets and rings. Not conventional designs from Cartier or Tiffany, but rare settings and gems from Africa, India, and Egypt.

Seeing Janet surrounded by such opulence, I always remembered the day I was entering the old Fox Studios at Sunset and Western and noticed a little extra girl I'd worked with in a Universal picture pacing up and down the sidewalk. She was made up and wearing an old-fashioned dress.

"What are you doing here, for heaven's sake?" I asked.

"Waiting to make a test for *The Johnstown Flood*," she replied.

"But why don't you sit in your dressing room, dear?"

"Haven't one. They gave me this dress, put on my make-up, and told me to wait. I came outside. Thought if I walked it would calm my nerves. I'm shaking."

"How long have you been out here?"

"I can't remember—maybe an hour."

Just then an assistant director yelled from the doorway, "Janet Gaynor—ready for you——" She looked like an accordion about to fold up. I grabbed her. "Keep your chin up, honey. If it's your part, you'll get it. If it isn't, you don't want it."

She hugged me nervously, sailed in, made the test, and got the job.

The following year Janet made screen history with Charlie Farrell in *Seventh Heaven.* Silent-picture fans will never forget that one. When Frank Borzage directed these young screen sweethearts they did some of the most haunting love scenes ever filmed. Borzage put a five-piece string orchestra on the set, ordered a musical theme which was a favorite song of Janet's, and the fiddlers bore down hard. Over and over they played the thing until everyone around turned to jelly with love and laughter.

Janet knew she was in love, bless her heart. Madly, wildly, passionately, sweetly in love with Charlie off screen as well as on. Borzage made that longing love of Janet's his directorial touch. He knew Farrell was in love with Virginia Valli. Charlie married Virginia and today is the owner and grand mogul of the Racquet Club in Palm Springs.

Many times I conspired with Adrian on ways to put over some of his more daring fashions. The first time he combined black velvet and white organdy was in a dress he made for me. He felt sure if he showed the gown on a hanger to Mr. Mayer, it wouldn't be used. So he asked me to put it on and model it for the big boss.

I could always get in to see L.B. So, done to the teeth, I entered and, with a curtsy and a hammy gesture, said, "Well, how do you like it?"

"Hedda, it's beautiful."

"Thank you. Good-by."

"Just a minute. Did you come in here to show off your dress?"

"Sure. Adrian was afraid he wouldn't get away with it. I'm his clotheshorse."

"Well, tell Adrian he was wrong." That was L.B.'s okay.

The designer had his heart set on putting a pillbox on top of Garbo's head, with strings tied under the chin. You may remember that hat. Later it became as much a part of the smart woman's uniform as a mink coat.

It was revolutionary then. It still is.

The picture was *As You Desire Me,* and I played Garbo's sister. Adrian designed for me what looked to be a giant, overgrown, oversexed artichoke made entirely of blue ribbon. That hat was part of the plot.

When I appeared in it before director George Fitzmaurice, who had approval of all clothes, he screeched, "Oh no! You can't wear that!"

"And why not?" I demanded.

"Because no one would see anything else on the screen."

"Is that bad?"

"You're not the star. They must look at Garbo."

"Oh, come now, can't I have some crumbs of glory?"

"Not in that hat, you can't," he assured me.

At that moment, as Adrian and I had planned, in walked Garbo, wearing the pillbox tied under her chin. Now even George Fitzmaurice couldn't damn two hats in a minute and a half. He gave her a sick stare, looked at me, then said, "Change your hat, Hopper, we'll get on with the scene." The plot worked as planned. I got the oversexed artichoke for my private collection, and Garbo wore the pillbox.

Adrian studied Garbo like a surgeon would an X ray. She was big-boned, square-shouldered, mannish. He accentuated these obstacles to femininity and had a great deal to do with her screen success.

He also inaugurated the high-necked, long-sleeved evening-gown fashion. You've never seen Garbo in a plunging neckline. So distinctive were his fashions that after each picture the studio was inundated with requests from all over the world from people begging for a suit, a coat, or a dress worn by Garbo. They sent signed checks to be filled in for any amount if they could only secure one of her costumes.

Garbo, on the other hand, cared nothing for the clothes. Once she let slide from her body a superb gown made for *Mata Hari* which had cost ten thousand dollars and on which sewing women had worked for eight solid weeks. Slipping on her old skirt and turtleneck sweater, she remarked to Adrian with a sigh, "Now I feel comfortable."

Her favorite exercise was swimming in a friend's pool. When Garbo arrived the master took all the servants out for a ride, and the star had the place to herself. Shedding her raiment, she put on a huge straw hat and, except for the topper, swam in the nude.

For *Two-Faced Woman,* Adrian designed twenty-four beautiful costumes. I know; I looked them over where they hung in the wardrobe department. But director George Cukor decided Garbo couldn't wear any of them. She must look different in this film. She wore woolen sweaters, ready-made clothes, and two fake diamond clips in her frizzled hair. It was the last picture she made and one of her few failures.

Adrian, who had done so much to make Garbo a legend of glamour, left the studio because of the incident.

Playing Garbo's sister in *As You Desire Me* was the only contact I had with her. Before shooting we rehearsed for a week. The star was invariably prompt, but always shy. At

week's end, though, she was one of us, and remained so all through the making of the picture.

She'd arrive on the set at 9 A.M., letter-perfect in her lines and ready to shoot. Every afternoon director Fitzmaurice served tea made by the property man, and members of the cast would vie with each other in bringing delicious cookies and cakes from home. One day Garbo bit into a cookie and said, "My mother used to make these at home. Where did they come from?"

"I brought them," I said. "My cook is Swedish too. Her name is Dagmar, and she made these especially for Miss Garbo." She was delighted, and I brougbt cookies on the set every other day until the picture was finished.

Tea wasn't good enough, however, for Erich von Strobeim, who caused so many delays by not being able to remember his lines. On the last day of the picture he surprised everybody by serving vintage champagne. It may have been his way of apologizing to the star, who never showed a bit of annoyance at the many hours' delay his actions had caused her.

The picture ended with regrets—"See you soon," "Wonderful working with you"—tbe usual thing. Three weeks later I glimpsed Garbo on the lot, waved, called, "Hi, there!" She gave me a frightened glance and flew off in the opposite direction.

Not long ago, when she was thinking of doing a picture for Metro, she dined at Chasen's with writer John Gunther. I went over to the table and asked if she really intended to make a film.

"Do you really think the people want me?" she asked.

"I don't think," I replied. "I know. Because your fans have never stopped writing to ask when you're going to return."

Paul Bern, the producer of *As You Desire Me,* was one of the kindest men who ever trod the double-crossing synthetic cobblestones of Hollywood. He also was Jean Harlow's husband. Under his guidance Jean blossomed into one of the biggest money-makers MGM ever had. In *Red Dust,* her first picture at tbe studio, she was given Clark Gable as her co-star.

You called Paul Bern "friend" after one meeting. I'd known him for years; not intimately, but well enough to take my problems to him. It was Paul who insisted that I play in Garbo's picture. He knew that unless I got an important part in an important picture my days at that studio were numbered.

Once I mentioned casually that my favorite flowers were yellow roses. Every Christmas for years dozens of yellow roses arrived at my house with his card. No message. He just wanted me to know that someone was remembering me during my thin years.

Paul would do anything for a friend. A happily married producer, who had never broken his marriage vows, suddenly conceived a mad passion for an actress who was working in a picture for him and who reciprocated his feeling. The obsession became intolerable to him, so he went to Paul for guidance.

"Get the urge out of your system," said Bern. "I'll help you. Tell you what we'll do. I have a bungalow at one of the hotels which I use for story conferences among other things. I'll invite the lady to have dinner with me Saturday night. You come in about nine o'clock, take over, and I'll quietly make my exit. You can tell your wife you're having a conference with me and not to expect you home until morning, and I'll back you up."

The producer said, "That will be perfect. She knows I have to stop at a writer's house for a story conference Sunday noon, and that will give me time to gain my composure before going home."

It was the perfect alibi.

Everything went according to Paul's plan. It was a beautiful Sunday morning in September 1932 when the producer said good-by to the beautiful actress, left the hotel bungalow, and stopped off at the writer's house for his conference. He was surprised to find Hollywood's big brass there. Their gloom could have been cut with a cleaver. Never during the greatest picture crisis had they looked so unhappy.

"What's going on here?" asked the happy man. "Did someone die?"

They could have struck him in the face. "Haven't you read the papers? Don't you know that Paul Bern is dead?"

The perfect alibi shattered by a bullet.

The producer, the first friend Paul Bern ever failed in his life, ran out of the house and was violently ill on the front lawn.

Many times you've read that this or that event rocked Hollywood. But the town really shook on the morning when we read of Paul's death. The newspapers called it suicide. It's still one of our town's three unsolved mysteries. Along with the murder of William Desmond Taylor and the death of Thelma Todd, Paul Bern's "suicide" has never been properly explained—to my satisfaction, at least.

He was found by a servant on the floor of his bedroom in Benedict Canyon in front of a mirror, naked, with a bullet hole in his temple. A gun was found six feet away, and on a cabinet near by a note to Jean Harlow:

> Dearest dear: Unfortunately this is the only way to make good the frightful wrong I have done you and to wipe out my abject humiliation. I love you. You understand that last night was only a comedy.

Paul devoted himself hungrily to many beautiful women. He liked to talk with them, look at them, become part of their lives. But ironically Nature had withheld from him the manly vigor that assuages passion. As a rule, however, men don't commit suicide because of that lack. Nor does a suicide usually throw a gun six feet away after killing himself.

I've never believed that Paul, a sensitive and fine-grained man, could have stood stark naked before a mirror and killed himself. It doesn't add up.

While we were making *As You Desire Me*, Paul developed a tummy and asked if I knew of a masseur who could take it off.

"Sure," I said. "I've got one who works on me twice a week to keep me thin. That little round padding you've got will disappear in a couple of months. I'll arrange for some treatments."

A few weeks later my masseuse, who was also a trained nurse, said, "I'm sorry, Miss Hopper, but I can't work on your friend Mr. Bern."

"Why not?" I asked.

"Well, when I start massaging his stomach he gets such a death-like grip on the bath towel he's wrapped around his middle that I can't get him to let go. If he'd relax, I could help him in no time. But he won't. I told him I was a trained nurse and had seen everything. But I guess he just doesn't believe me."

I never was convinced that a man so modest in the presence of a trained masseuse could show his physical inadequacies in death any more than he could in life.

I might be wrong. It could have been Paul's last act of cynicism, although at his funeral Conrad Nagel declared that Paul was naïve as a child and was not affected by cruelty or cynicism.

It took that vagabond writer Jim Tully, who recognized the weakness and waywardness in himself as well as in others, to set down the real tribute to Bern in *Script* magazine:

Paul Bern was no more naïve than Talleyrand. He was no more a child than is Sigmund Freud. If he had a tendency toward the abnormal, so had every man of great mentality and sensitive heart through all the miserable ages . . . He was . . . an *old soul.* As the pearl is made through the hurt of the oyster, the hurts of the centuries made Paul Bern . . . A great Jew, he made up for a million pawnbrokers in the same way that Padraic Pearse made one forget a million Irish cops with clubs . . . Good-by, Paul. May your dust choke the eagles.

20

Many mothers who raise a son without benefit of a man around the house live a lifetime without knowing how important a father is to a boy. I learned this when Bill was ten.

I was in the garden one day when I overheard him bragging to a schoolmate about his dad. Bill made quite a speech. To hear him tell it, De Wolf Hopper was the greatest actor ever to grace Broadway; his stories were quoted from one end of the country to the other; he could sing, dance, and knew more big words than any other man; and Hopper not only recited *Casey at the Bat* but he wrote it as well. Every baseball player in the world knew that!

I listened in amazement, and thought, This imagination may carry him far. But it opened my eyes to how important a father is to a son. And whenever possible I added to Bill's repertoire of stories about his old man.

When Bill was nearing his fifteenth birthday Wolfie came to Hollywood with his sixth wife to make a picture at MGM. His second try at movies was even more disastrous than his first. He was signed to make a film with Fay Templeton, Weber and Fields, and other old-timers. Much footage was shot of these stars in their old stage routines, but the picture never was finished. Halfway through, a studio economist realized there was no story and the undertaking was abandoned.

I saw Wolfie in the parking lot across from Metro and asked if he'd like to come to my house on Christmas Day. Some of his New York friends would be there and he could visit with Bill.

He said he'd try.

He came and greeted Digby Bell's nephew, Roy Webb, head of the RKO music department, who was amateur golf champion of Siasconset when we lived there some months after Bill's birth. Several other friends of his were there, and some newcomers—one a young tenor brought out from New York by Fox for a musical.

Wolfie greeted Bill, his friends, and was introduced to the rest. Five minutes after his arrival he had taken over. Everyone was convulsed at his stories. The house was *his;* the son was *his.* Even I might have been his possession. Wolfie never lost that knack of taking the center of the stage and holding it.

Finally the young singer leaned over to me and whispered, "Who is that man?"

Thinking he hadn't caught the name, I said, "De Wolf Hopper."

"Hopper? Any relation?"

"Slightly," I whispered back. "He just happens to be the father of my son."

"Good God almighty, no!" shouted the tenor.

Then I suggested that Wolfie might like to visit Bill alone in his room, since they hadn't seen each other for so many years. Hopper left his ready-made audience reluctantly, but he and Bill went out hand in hand.

When they came back, my guests were gone. Bill's eyes were big as saucers, and he was hanging on his father's every word. It was like looking back on my youth. Even Wolfie was impressed. "Son," he said, "if I can get tickets, how would you like to go with me to the Rose Bowl game on New Year's Day?"

"Oh gee, Dad, that would be wonderful!"

Neither of them knew that I went out next day and paid thirty dollars for two seats to that game. I was afraid Wolfie might forget, and I didn't want Bill disappointed. I could have saved the money, because Hopper came through in a big way and gave Bill the thrill of his life.

Cries of greeting came from dozens of male throats throughout the Bowl: "Why, Wolfie, you sly old dog! When did you get to town? And who is that handsome lad with you?"

Bill burst with pride as he told me, then proudly showed me a twenty-dollar gold piece his father had given him.

When Bill was ready to return to the Catalina Island School after the holidays, he said, "Mother, I hate to mention it, but I need some spending money."

"What about that gold piece your father gave you?"

"Oh, I couldn't spend that," he said.

That hurt. He had no compunction about spending the money I gave him. For years I'd crossed his palm, but I was also the one who reprimanded him, so I was taken for granted. The milk of human kindness failed me. I replied, "If you can't break that gold piece, you'll have to go without spending money."

He went into his room, closed the door, thought it over, and five minutes later put the gold piece in my hand and said, "Please change it for me, Mother."

For sentiment's sake, I kept the coin until F.D.R. threatened us with dire punishment if we didn't give up our gold; then I parted with it. Now I wish I had it back. There's no fool like an old fool.

A few years later Bill decided he would like to take a crack at acting rather than go to college. I wrote Wolfie and asked if he would allow Bill to join his company. After a few months Bill could decide whether he had talent and wanted to pursue an acting career. I felt sure Wolfie's guidance at this time would be most valuable.

Hopper chose not to see it my way. He wrote back that it was a bad idea and he could do nothing to help.

I wrote, not very kindly, three or four times, but Wolfie was adamant. I was furious!

Not until after Wolfie's death did I learn from his other son, Jack, why he wouldn't permit it. With his wife and their company, he was traveling from town to town by bus, doing a streamlined version of bits and pieces from Gilbert and Sullivan. Wolfie's pride was so great he wouldn't risk disillusioning Bill by allowing him to see this shabby kind of theatrical life.

He underestimated his son and robbed himself of a self-made audience. I'm sure the experience would have enriched them both.

Jack Hopper thought as I did, and confessed that all his life he wanted to act. Necessity had forced him into a New York bank as messenger boy. Although he became vice-president of the organization, he never got over being stage-struck.

When my plans didn't work out, I sent Bill to Ogunquit, Maine. Friends of mine managed the summer stock theater there. Another friend was motoring across the continent and took Bill on as passenger.

Bill never made a dent in the acting profession that summer, but he had the happy privilege of painting some

scenery for Maude Adams, who came out of retirement for one week. She wanted a second curtain, which Bill and some junior members of the company helped to hang. On opening night it came down suddenly in the middle of one of her speeches, and Miss Adams decided that one curtain was ample.

Bill was a fan of Maude Adams, but his feeling wasn't reciprocated. She had one loyal follower, however, a lady who came from Chicago to Maine and sat through every one of her performances.

The biggest event at Metro in the early thirties was the making of *Rasputin and the Empress,* starring *all* the Barrymores. When Ethel arrived at MGM all the dressing rooms except one were in use. That one belonged to Garbo, who was in Europe on a vacation.

"All right," Ethel said briskly, "I'll take it."

The studio shuddered at the idea of turning over the keys, even to her. No one had ever been inside the place except Garbo's colored maid, Ursula, who, incidentally, drew her salary from the studio. But Ethel had a way of insisting and got the keys. I was with her when she threw open the door. "Heaven's above!" she cried. "It's the black hole of Calcutta!"

Sure enough, it was. The walls were midnight blue; the chairs were uncomfortable, fragile French gilt.

"I can't breathe in a place like this," Ethel complained.

So the art department got busy and covered the walls with chintz, carefully tacking it over the blue paint. They brought in chintz-covered easy chairs and made it livable according to Ethel's standards.

Ethel glared at a heating apparatus in the corner. "What is this hideous thing?" she asked.

"Radiator. When the weather gets cold you need one," they told her.

"Take it out!" she intoned. "I won't be here when it's cold." Until it was removed she wouldn't go on the set.

Metro had every reason to please Ethel. It was quite a feather in the studio's cap to bring the three Barrymores together in the only picture that featured them. Every role in the film had been sought after by leading actors and actresses.

John Lodge, now governor of Connecticut, was starring at another studio in a few minor efforts when his wife, the beautiful Francesca Braggiotti, decided she'd get into the Barrymore film. She had one important scene to do with the

mad monk Rasputin, played by Lionel, and Francesca didn't intend to let anything hinder it. When she wasn't working she sat on the set watching Lionel like a leopardess.

Lionel had a habit of tilting his chair against the scenery and falling sound asleep. If the chair tilted too far, he could fall over and break his neck—then what would happen to Francesca and the rape scene she was to do with him? She made like a fireman on duty backstage. Every time Lionel's chair tilted, she was right on watch.

The day came for the rape scene, and a sinister bit of business it was, too. All of us who weren't working rallied round to watch. Francesca, with her own beautiful blond hair flowing almost to her knees, was a vision. Lionel gave his all. But you never saw it on the screen. The rape of Francesca fell on the cutting-room floor.

When *Rasputin and the Empress* was completed, Garbo's dressing room was stripped of all the Barrymore chintz and put back exactly as it was before. When Garbo returned she never dreamed that her quarters had been invaded by the matriarch of the American theater—unless she felt the aura of Ethel's presence.

The studio went all out to entertain prominent personages. Being under contract to MGM during the Louis B. Mayer-Irving Thalberg reign, when Leo the Lion's roar meant the best picture in town, I was deputized to show celebrated guests around the lot when I wasn't acting.

Once I hit the jackpot. The guest was none other than General Douglas MacArthur, as handsome a gent as it's been my privilege to see—before or since.

I was so impressed I couldn't resist asking for his photograph.

"Only if you'll give me yours," he said gallantly.

So I got his picture. I took it for granted that mine would wind up in some military wastebasket. During World War II, I'd look at MacArthur's picture and smile over the remembrance of a happier day.

That was my one and only contact with him until the late spring of 1951 when he was bounced out of his job by President Harry Truman and returned to New York to receive a hero's welcome.

I can be a fan too! In New York for the Newspaper Publishers Convention, I neglected my business to haunt the lobby of the Waldorf Towers in hope of catching a glimpse of the general and his sweet wife. But I kept missing them.

The day came when I was invited to sit in the reviewing

stand at a big parade which MacArthur was to review on Fifth Avenue. Glory be, I was seated just a couple of seats away from the general and his wife!

Believe it or not, I kept my mouth shut and stared at that wonderful man. I was introduced to Mrs. MacArthur, who pulled the general by the sleeve and said, "Look who's here."

"Why, Hedda," said MacArthur, "how are you? I'll bet you didn't keep that photograph I sent you."

"I'll never get over his remembering after all those years.

During the Olympic games of 1932 my duties as hostess were more frequent than my sound-stage jobs. Metro put on quite a show for the athletes, especially the Swedish delegation, for some reason. What a job I had rounding up the important Swedes in town to meet the competitors.

Parties were given by social and civic leaders. The Japanese swimming champions were lavishly entertained. The whole thing was like a rehearsal for the United Nations.

The concluding banquet was given on the final night of the games by the Earle C. Anthonys. Howard Chandler Christy once named Irene Anthony "one of the most beautiful women I ever saw." Earle owns a large radio station and the Packard automobile agency.

The dinner, given in the Anthonys' gorgeous hilltop home, was for Olympics officers, society people, and civic leaders. Only six people from the film industry were asked—and at my suggestion. It seemed to me no more than fair that Mr. and Mrs. Louis B. Mayer, Norma Shearer and Irving Thalberg, and Ina Claire should be included in the list. After all, Metro had done yeoman service entertaining the participants.

Even though I had helped to plan the party, my seat was at the foot of the table. At the last moment a titled Swede, head of that contingent, asked that I sit by him. But the seating arrangement was by protocol, so I got the tail end.

Ina Claire was topside, beside Prince Lichtenstein, who had shepherded the contestants from his tiny land. As he spoke English, he was entrusted with the expense money. However, when the prince and his flock arrived in Los Angeles he supposedly telephoned a friend from the railroad station. The friend tore to the station, whisked the prince away, and the athletes were left stranded until some member of the Olympic Committee happened by and rescued them. At least that's the way I heard it.

Hollywood fell hook, line, and sinker for a visiting maharajah

who was said to go around with his pockets stuffed with a fortune in uncut gems, which he liked to play with as an old Manchu would finger a bit of jade. The report was that the maharajah never went anywhere without his gems. If he took a liking to you, which he frequently did if you were female, he'd casually hand out a ruby, emerald, diamond, or maybe a pear-shaped pearl.

Metro tossed a tea party for him to which all the girls under contract were invited. The wardrobe department was stripped to the last rag, and we were instructed to dress to the eyeballs. The studio would lend the clothes if our own weren't good enough. After all, nothing was too good for a maharajah, whose millions might come in handy to finance a picture. You never saw such girls or such excitement. When the great man arrived we were all afloat—on tea.

And on the maharajah's arm? That clever little Negro actress, Nina Mae McKinney. When he left the party she was still the charm that dangled from his arm. None of us got even so much as the glint of a jewel.

I checked with Nina Mae later. She hadn't collected anything either. The mahafajah's press agent earned a year's salary with the story of the jewels, which, like so many Hollywood stories, was a dream-up.

We turned the tables on Winston Churchill when he came to Metro for lunch. He was under contract to W. R. Hearst at the time, so cocktails were served in Marion Davies' bungalow. Mr. Hearst, our host, hovered over the whole affair, smiling benignly.

After a while we filed into the largest sound stage and sat down to a five-course luncheon.

Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy sang a duet. Larry Tibbett did "The Road to Mandalay," a sort of Shanghai gesture to Winnie.

Toward the end of the feast, when everyone was in a mellow mood, Fred Niblo, toastmaster, introduced Churchill and asked him to say a few words—off the record.

Churchill wasn't as tubby then as he is today, but, with his round pink cheeks that resembled more than anything else a baby's bottom, he did look like a mature cherub. I've always wished that his father, as well as his mother, had been born in America; then we could have taken advantage of that great and glorious mind.

Smilingly he complied with Niblo's request, made a little speech, then sat down. Niblo said slyly, "Mr. Churchill's speech was so delightful I'm sure everyone would like to

hear it again." From the four corners of the sound stage, loud-speakers blasted the speech. Winnie's startled look changed to horror. At that time the last thing he wanted to do was talk for the record. What he said was carried in all the Hearst newspapers far and wide. How was Churchill to know that a microphone had been hidden in the flower arrangement in front of his place? Hollywood had a million little tricks like this and used them all.

Entertaining world figures at MGM Studio was no problem for Ida Koverman, Louis B. Mayer's assistant. Ida, an amazing woman who knew leaders of industry in all forty-eight states, first came to California to unite the Republican forces, especially the women, in support of Herbert Hoover when he ran for the presidency. Among the people she met on her trip West was Mayer, who, through Ida, became interested in politics on a national scale. L.B., always his own best talent scout, persuaded Ida to leave Hoover and become his number-one assistant at the studio. After Hoover moved into the White House, L.B. visited him many times.

Soon after Ida settled at MGM, Louis branched out and started to make speeches. Up to that time you couldn't have gotten a word out of him if his life had depended upon it; but once he got the hang of orating, like so many of us, he fell in love with the sound of his own voice.

Ida insisted that his speeches be carefully written, then she rehearsed them with him and went along when he made his appearances. L.B. had a tendency to get carried away and stray from the script, so Ida had a signal worked out to stop him. It interested me to see how closely Louis—who as high mogul of MGM had the power to make men and women jump at his every word—watched Ida, and how quick he was to obey the signal.

However, I never saw him take orders from anyone else.

When he left the wild animals behind at the Selig Zoo and moved over to Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer in Culver City, he became the absolute czar of that studio. And I don't use the word "czar" lightly.

I was in Mayer's office one July 3 when he sent for Fred Niblo, an important director since he had made the mammoth best seller *Ben Hur*.

Fred came in running. "Yes, Mr. Mayer. You sent for me?"

"I want you and Mrs. Niblo to be ready to board my

yacht at six o'clock tonight for a cruise to Catalina Island over the week end."

"But, Mr. Mayer," Fred said, "we've arranged a Fourth of July party for our children. I understood your guests would be so-and-so."

"That was so," his boss replied, "but fifteen minutes ago they canceled, and I want you to fill in for them."

Again Fred offered an excuse. But L.B. fastened those blue eyes on him and in a cold voice said, "Be at San Pedro at 6 P.M."

The Niblos were there.

It wasn't too many years after this that Fred lost his MGM contract and found himself at liberty. One of our finest directors and a founder of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, he remained at liberty until his death. His son Fred Jr., a fine writer, did well at the studios until he testified before the Un-American Activities Committee that there were Communists in Hollywood. Niblo declared his loyalty to America. A year later he was helping to build airplanes at Lockheed.

Ida Koverman was Mayer's good right hand. Her kindness to newcomers Robert Taylor, Judy Garland, Nelson Eddy, Mario Lanza, Elizabeth Taylor, and dozens more has become a Hollywood legend.

L.B., a thwarted thespian, always could outact any star he had under contract. One of the best stories he ever told me was how he got Greer Garson to play *Mrs. Miniver*, which won her an Academy Award. Norma Shearer, thinking she was too young to play the mother of a son old enough to go to war, turned the part down. Greer felt exactly the same way.

When Greer went to L.B.'s office to argue the point, he put on such an act that at the end of the interview she said, "Mr. Mayer, you're demanding that I play Mrs. Miniver?"

"No," said the wily L.B. "I'm pointing out to you what a wonderful character she is—sensitive, fine, noble. What an example you'll be to all actresses. You'll prove that youth doesn't matter, that an *actress* can play anything—a girl of eighteen or a woman of eighty-five."

"Then," Greer said, "if you feel that way about it, I'll play the part." She left the room, closed the door, and fainted in the hall. Mayer rang for his secretary, took an aspirin, and collapsed in his chair. He deserved an Oscar for that performance, but Greer got it for the picture.

After twenty-two years of hard work, Ida Koverman suf-

fered a stroke and was taken to a small hospital. It was feared she might never walk again, which meant she couldn't work and might become a liability rather than an asset.

She sold her automobile to help meet expenses, and as weeks rolled into months and bills piled up, she was asked if she wouldn't prefer living at the Motion Picture Relief Fund Home, where her living and treatments would be free. While the home is beautifully run, nothing can take the place of your own flat and your own belongings. Ida had kept her apartment during her illness.

A studio emissary sounded me and four of her friends out on the home idea. We didn't like it and said so, after which the plan was abandoned. Ida went to her flat with a nurse to care for her. Her salary was one of the smallest at the studio and she wasn't able to save for a rainy day. When it was suggested that she sell her grand piano to help pay hospital expenses, she got mad, started to fight, and didn't stop until she walked again.

Now fully recovered, she's assisting Dore Schary, new head of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

When I went to see Ida in the hospital I remembered a visit I'd made to her boss, L.B., when several years before he was thrown from a horse and broke his pelvis. He was hospitalized for weeks. To speed his recovery, he lay in a hammock strung above his bed. The day I called on him, his room was a picture. I've never seen a floral display to top it, not even at a gangster's funeral. Trees of orchids, the rarest; a baby's cradle filled with roses which played "Bye, Bye, Baby Bunting"; pots of gardenias, camellias—every rare blossom that blooms.

On his bedside table was a stack of letters. The top one was a eulogy written by the then Archbishop Francis Spellman. That's the one I was asked to read first—and aloud. I plowed through it and many more. Several were from studio workmen.

With tears clouding his eyes—Louis could always turn them on as readily as you turn on the water tap—he said, "I had no idea how much my people love me."

It was hitting below the belt, but I couldn't resist reminding him of a Christmas they hadn't loved him quite so well.

During the depression a story appeared in the *Hollywood Reporter* that every MGM workman receiving fifty dollars a week or less would get a special bonus of fifty dollars at Christmas time.

There was great joy when the employees read this. Those who'd expected a slim holiday went out and put a down payment on a tricycle, a toy, or a present for their wives. They planned to pick up the gifts the day before Christmas when they got their bonus. But on Christmas Eve there was no bonus. The workers were told that the New York executives had killed the plan.

That was one of the blackest days in the studio's history. It would have cost so little to pay that bonus. If the studio hadn't intended doing so, the item in the *Reporter* should have been denied immediately.

Despite my sometimes embarrassing memory, Louis always welcomed my visits to the hospital. He would even phone and say, "You haven't been here in a week. What's wrong?"

I'd explain I was busy, and he would say, "But I enjoy your visits, Hedda. When I talk with you, it's like speaking to my conscience."

I guess he no longer talks to his conscience, because we haven't spoken to each other for three years.

21

Ever notice that when bad days come all your hard luck seems to have been waiting to fall on you like a ton of brick?

Reveling in a seven-year contract at MGM, I lost it.

I wasn't a star, only a featured player in support of the big shots. I was the mean woman who made the stars look good. I've slapped more children, tumbled down more houses of cards, kicked over more building blocks, and rapped more innocent knuckles than any female fiend in an old-time orphanage.

In England some called me "The Major General" because I was the perennial fixer-upper. I was also the matron forever on the make; the title-hunting mama, daughter in one hand, checkbook in the other.

When there were such dames in scripts, Metro formed the pleasing habit of saying, "Okay, get Hopper in here." On the screen I looked ridiculous, but the money was nice.

I must have gone to L. B. Mayer no less than a score of times and said, "Why must I always play a slitch?"

He'd say, "We can't have a bitch playing a bitch. A

woman who looks like a lady makes those parts bearable, believable." Do you wonder why I've always said Mayer was a better actor than anyone he had under contract?

"But why must I play them all?" I'd yell. I never played a good woman on the screen till after my contract with Metro was finished—and then for free in a short subject for the benefit of crippled children.

Being under contract to Metro gave you a "high rating." A player on the list at the top studio was in demand everywhere. Then, if you weren't working on the home lot and another studio had a part for you, you were loaned out. You got your salary; the studio got half as much with four weeks' guarantee, and pictures usually ran from ten to twelve weeks.

I did no moping. If there was no part for me at MGM, I visited other studios and rented myself out. That's how I ended up in *The Man Who Played God*, with George Arliss. This picture was Bette Davis's first screen chance, her steppingstone to success. Bette had had a grim experience at Universal and was ready to quit Hollywood for keeps when she was brought to Mr. Arliss's attention. He appointed himself her patron saint. Wish he'd done the same for me; I was treated like an alley cat with the scurvy.

When it came my turn to rehearse, Arliss screwed that monocle of his in his cold eye and said, "Now let's see what you can do." As good a method as any of freezing an actor to the floor.

I won't say I lacked confidence, but George Arliss killed every vestige of it. I blundered through a rehearsal. Arliss said frigidly, "I suggest you study the part and do it for me tomorrow."

My trusty old temper boiled up, but in the nick of time a man who'd played with Arliss on stage and screen for twenty-two years edged around to me and said quietly, "Don't let him upset you. He's been doing it to me for over twenty years."

"Why have you stayed to take it?" I asked.

"An actor must live. The pay is good; there is always a long engagement. But I never walked on stage that I didn't tremble in my shoes. I knew life would catch up with him someday, though.

"It did. That was my reward. Remember when he played Shylock on the New York stage? The critics who'd always praised him to the skies tore him apart. For the first time I saw fear in his eyes when he walked on stage, just as all these years he had put fear in my heart. Just as he put

fear in yours today." The man shrugged. "I'm telling you this because I didn't want you to feel humiliated. He's not worth it."

Bette got the opposite treatment. Arliss was all ingratiating smiles, couldn't furnish her with enough help. Bette blossomed.

I'd done well for Metro on loan-outs, and for myself too. But I'd been around too long; they grew tired of my face. God knows I was tired of it too, but I was stuck with it! The studio was in a better position; they could do something about it.

Gradually, as they brought other actresses—some of them even older than I—out from Broadway, it was up to me to arrange my own deals. I spent a whole year at Pathé, traveling to MGM only to get my pay check. It was nice traveling if you could get it! I was half a year at Paramount. MGM made a profit on me of not less than twelve thousand dollars, sometimes eighteen thousand dollars a year.

Then came the collapse of the William Fox picture empire, and the birth of 20th Century-Fox, when Darryl Zanuck joined Joe Schenck, brother of Nick, president of Loew's and MGM.

Twentieth Century had a vault full of stories, plenty of equipment, but few stars. So what more natural for Brother Nick than to lend MGM's biggest stars to Brother Joe and to Darryl Zanuck. The trouble was Nick reckoned without Irving Thalberg.

Irving had built up those Metro stars. His pictures would be in competition with 20th Century. He put down his foot with a thump. "From now on no player will be loaned from this studio," said Thalberg. "I took unknowns from the extra ranks and trained them. They've become box-office names around the globe. Does Armour allow its hams to go out with a Wilson label?"

Irving was farseeing. He had watched Darryl Zanuck grow from a writer to one of Warner's top producers and knew that, given a studio of his own, Darryl would become the big threat to Metro. And how right he was.

Today Zanuck is hailed as the finest producer in Hollywood. After Thalberg died and Louis B. Mayer became more interested in horses than in actors, MGM—from a standpoint of prestige—started to slide downhill.

Like most of Thalberg's thinking, his refusal to lend his stars was sound. Nobody under contract to Metro could be loaned out to any other studio.

There went my living!

I had a long talk with Irving about it. He said simply, "I'm sorry, Hedda, but when you make a rule it has to be for all. I can't make any exceptions." So when my option came up a few months hence, I was off the lot and minus a job.

When you have no salary after having had a steady one for seven years, you have to get out and dig. I made a discovery which is typical Hollywood psychology. Instead of being welcome any longer at studios where I had played, I was shunned. I had lost my contract.

So when Louis Mayer suggested I could make money selling actors if I became associated with his friend Hattie Carnegie's husband, Major John Zanft, in the agency business, I thought, "What the heck? It's still show business. He may be right."

I agreed to go in with the major, despite the fact that selling flesh was always abhorrent to me. I was always reminded of the poor souls sold on the block in olden days, and more recently into slavery. Many of our actors and actresses were sold into slavery, but the chains that bound them were of fine gold studded with jewels, and their reward—all the luxuries in the world, and a way of life which they'd only dreamed about.

Putting this shadow and substance behind me, I decided to have a go at it. After I had met the major, we set about looking for an office location and finally settled on a suite in a prominent bank building in Beverly Hills.

Part of my duties was to introduce the major to prospective clients. Inasmuch as I knew the Hollywood people —not only actors, but producers, writers, and directors—I was in a position to be helpful. I also knew which star was dissatisfied with his present agent. In those days you could jolly well leave one agent and take another if you were unhappy. Actors were always on the lookout for one who could walk through the front door of every mogul in the picture business. Major John Zanft could and did.

The day before we were to open for business I was shown to my desk in the outer office which I was to share with two secretaries. Then the major called me in to discuss the setup, which frankly I didn't like. If I was to be as useful as I knew I could be, my place was not outside his door but in a little office of my own where I could receive our clients in private.

As I entered the major's office he was holding an intimate conversation over the telephone with, I hope, a gentleman. I

don't believe any lady would have listened that long to such a conversation.

I waited until he hung up, stuck out my hand, and said, "It's been nice knowing you, Major. Good-by."

I didn't wait to explain. He was intelligent and could figure it out for himself. I had scarcely reached my own home when I had a telephone call from Louis B. Mayer asking what had happened. I told him. All he said was, "I'm sorry it didn't work out. I think you could have helped the major and made yourself some money."

Having the agency business in mind, I went to my old friend Rebecca Uhr, whom I'd known in New York when she was Edward Small's assistant. Now she had her own business. When I told her the story she said, "There's an office next door. Come on in with us."

Then started my scramble for big names, because that's where the money is. Ten per cent of five thousand dollars a week is five hundred dollars, and there were lots of those babies around. I knew them socially and had befriended many in bygone days, but they weren't interested in me as an agent.

It was almost comic when I approached Joel McCrea. "Hedda," he said, "I love you. You know I do. But you're just not important enough to handle my business."

His remark cut through me like a knife at the time, but after thinking it over I realized he was right.

The people I got couldn't be sold. Even I knew they were second-raters. If I'd tried to sell myself as hard as I was working on them, I would never have had to go into the agency business. But the brain doesn't turn over as fast as when you're pushing along in a success groove. I soon learned that flesh peddling was not for me.

When I was offered the lead in the West Coast company of George Kaufman's successful play *Dinner at Eight,* I didn't walk to the first rehearsal, I ran. It was good to be back on the stage again with the delightful company of Broadway players: Louis Calhern, Martha Sleeper, Georgia Caine, Belle Dobé, Alice White, Jobyna Howland. Jobyna's Pomeranian dog, a present from Zoe Akins and named for her, was in the play too. It was a merry crew. We had the longest run of any stage play up to that time in Los Angeles; then we moved on to San Francisco.

When MGM bought the rights to the movie, naturally I asked to play my part in the film, but was promptly set back on my heels and told they had to have a "name." The

studio chose Billie Burke, a fact which didn't increase my affection for the lady.

I'd made a picture with her years before at Colonel William Thompson's home on the Hudson. Billie was quite annoyed that she hadn't been given Mrs. Thompson's dressing room in which to make her costume changes. Not content to share the first-floor dressing room with four females in the troupe, she was determined to have her privacy. Her maid secured a screen which she put around the wash-basin. That's where Billie dressed. It was pretty crowded behind that screen with the star and her maid, so I risked a look to see what was so precious.

I didn't make a very big hit with Miss Burke when I returned to my chums and said, "Girls, she hasn't got a thing that we don't have."

One week end I was invited to the Ensenada Hotel with a dozen Hollywood friends. The invitation said to bring a beau. My son Bill, seventeen and well over six feet tall, looked at least three years older than his years, so I asked if I might bring him.

The Mexicans are well known for their hospitality, and this was no exception. We arrived in time for cocktails and sauntered into the bar where the rest of the party had gathered.

While I sat at a table and ordered a long, cool drink, Bill ambled over to the bar. Later I noticed he was drinking something from a small glass that looked like water. I asked the waiter what it was.

"That's our native drink, miss. Tequila."

"Strong?" I asked.

"Hmmmm. Fairly," he replied.

"Suppose you bring me one. I'd like to taste it." I did. Strong? It had the kick of that twenty-mule team. But Bill was having a wonderful time, not knowing that I had my eye on him. He was lifting his tenth tequila when I joined him at the bar and said, "I wouldn't drink that if I were you. I believe you've had enough."

He appealed to the bartender. "Do you think I have?"

The latter eyed me with a jaundiced look and said, "One or two more won't hurt him any, ma'm."

"Now, see here, I ought to know when my son has had enough."

"Your son! I thought he was your boy friend. He's had five too many!"

There were no picture jobs and I had to start earning some money. I kept remembering Mrs. Frank Vanderlip's remark when I was selling Liberty Bonds in New York. "You're a salesman; you can sell anything," she'd said.

I'd made money in real estate, so I tried it again. I fared better than I had in the agency business.

One of the first houses I sold was to a director for forty-two thousand dollars. "Hey, this isn't bad," I told myself in happy surprise. But as we were about to close the deal at the real-estate office to go into escrow, an unknown gentleman appeared, announced that he was the director's business manager and unless we kicked in with a third of the commission to him, he'd kill the sale.

We investigated and learned that he could. The realtor wanted to kick him out of his office, but I thought half a loaf was better than none and, knowing how much good the publicity would do me, I agreed to pay.

He's still a business manager in Hollywood, and among his many clients are big stars and producers. He's not the only one in town who cuts in on what the stars buy—life insurance, purchase price of cars, houses, furs. But to this day this particular business manager would run a mile backward rather than meet me face to face.

I made several sales after this, did an occasional independent picture. Once I was given a Spanish house in Beverly Hills to sell, and sat me down to wait for somebody to come, look, and buy.

After two weeks I got good and mad. "This is silly!" I berated myself. "You're an actress—get out of this before it gets you!"

I turned the key in the lock of the hacienda, returned it to the agent, went home, packed my things, and next day took a train to New York.

Maybe I should have stuck around longer. That house changed hands many times. If I'd collected a commission on each new owner, I wouldn't have needed a job. Marion Davies bought and furnished it, then rented it to Laura Hope Crews, while she herself built a house across the street. When Greer Garson arrived from England she rented it and lived there for a year with her mother. After that I lost interest in its history.

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The day after my arrival in New York, I lunched with Elizabeth Arden and her lawyer Robert Rubin, who was also vice-president of MGM. Some years before this Bob had remarked to me, "You should get together with Elizabeth Arden. You two would get along, and it would mean a steady income for you—maybe an interest in the beauty business. The profits are gigantic."

Elizabeth's husband had managed her wholesale business, which left her free to spend her time in the Fifth Avenue salon. After their divorce she took on his job as well as her own. Before we finished luncheon she offered me the position in the salon.

I was to begin by taking every treatment in the book, to learn the beauty business from the soles of my feet up and down my spine. If one operator had an extra touch or gimmick, I was to pass it on to the other girls. Elizabeth and I would travel around and visit all her salons. I'd lecture about how movie and stage people kept physically fit, illustrate exercises, the importance of matching make-up with costumes, give tips on creams and colors, and generally put on a show. Miss Arden would then do the infighting; talk up her own products.

It was a grand idea, but we never got around to it.

The first thing that happened, I was offered a play, *Divided by Three,* with Judith Anderson and Jimmy Stewart, with Guthrie McClintic producing. So I got Elizabeth's consent to postpone my start with her until the end of the New York run.

I'd been away from the theater long enough to be rusty about the kind of shenanigans that go on sometimes during rehearsals. All the curves were thrown in *Divided by Three,* written by George Kaufman's first wife, Beatrice, and Peggy Pulitzer. The title was taken from the idea that the star Judith Anderson divided her affection into three parts: one for her husband, whom she didn't love; one for her lover, her husband's benefactor; the third for her son, who didn't know what was going on.

I was cast as the star's sister who lived abroad. While the sister was a sophisticated woman, she was surprised and shocked that the woman could close her eyes to the danger

she was letting herself in for in dividing by three.

During the first reading of the play, at the home of Guthrie and Katharine Cornell, I sensed the star's dislike for me. However, I'd signed a run-of-the-play contract and she couldn't have me fired. Soon I discovered her giving imitations of me for the pleasure of the rest of the cast. I must say they were good, too. Judith Anderson is a superb actress, and every member of the cast got the joke of which I was the butt. However, I'd known tough babies before and took it in stride.

Jimmy Stewart attracted my attention at the first reading. When it was over, I tracked him outside and said, "Why aren't you in Hollywood?"

"For what?" he said.

"Pictures, of course."

He laughed in that embarrassed way, saying ruefully, "Waal, what would they do with this puss of mine? It's no Arrow-collar ad."

"You're an actor. They could fix the rest. Pictures need a young actor with sincerity. I believe you'd do well."

Jimmy laughed it off.

The play had its dress rehearsal in New Haven. It was evident during rehearsals that Jimmy's acting would get the sympathy of the audience and he'd steal the notices.

So Guthrie came up with something. At the end of act two the action called for Jimmy to bring his fiancée home to meet his parents and the family's best friend. For the first time Jimmy was to learn that the friend was his mother's lover. While his fiancée was on the stage Jimmy was to turn and call his mother a whore.

When Guthrie sprung this new line on Stewart and asked him to read it, Jimmy fell apart. He begged to be let out of the play. "I can't do that, Mr. McClintic," he said. "Under no circumstances could I bring myself to call any woman that—and my mother, never! Especially with the girl I love standing beside me."

"Try it out anyway at the dress rehearsal, Jimmy," McClintic said soothingly. It was a cinch the line would be in at opening night in New York. That one line killed Jimmy's chances for success absolutely dead. While the play itself wasn't good, its chances were exploded by that line. I remember that opening night in New York between the second and third acts when George Kaufman paced up and down backstage, muttering, "The third act doesn't belong to the first two."

"This is a fine time to say that!" said McClintic. "Why didn't you say it sooner?"

"I'm only the author's husband—not the author," George replied.

Opening night all our friends were out front. I took a curtain call with the company. The star took her bows alone. Impatiently my friends yelled, "Hopper! Hopper!" I didn't get out there for any bow; the stage manager had strict orders not to let me.

Miss Anderson gave a party in her apartment after the play. Among my friends who were invited were the Frank Cases. The next day Frank came over to my table at the Algonquin and said, "I'm mad at you—we waited at Judith's for you till one o'clock in the morning. Where were you?"

"I wasn't invited. Did she give a party?"

Judith and I played a scene in the second act where we sat at opposite sides of a table. As the sister, I had to warn her that she couldn't get away with a certain situation. Why, even in France a mother wouldn't attempt it.

One matinee Judith started upstaging me by leaning back in her chair, her face directly to the audience. To stay where I was meant playing the scene, my one good one, with my back to the audience. So as Judith leaned I leaned with her. I ended up reclining on my coccyx. It was so obvious that the audience howled with laughter and applauded. Judith never tried that trick on me again.

I arranged for a fifteen-minute excerpt from the play to be put on NBC, thinking it might give box-office receipts a boost. The stage manager obtained Miss Anderson's consent and delivered her to the Algonquin Hotel where Jimmy Stewart and I waited.

When Judith arrived I offered her a cocktail. She accepted. We went to the studio, did our broadcast, and I asked her if she'd come back and dine with me. She declined. As we waited for our second-act entrance that night, not a word was exchanged. I was back in the icebox. No one admires Judith Anderson's ability as an actress more than I, but I never learned to applaud her as a human being.

During the eight-week run of *Divided by Three* my son Bill tried his wings on Broadway. I was able to hornswoggle my friend Edward Childs Carpenter into believing that Bill could act. The author gave him a small part in his forthcoming play, *Order Please.*

At the first rehearsal Carpenter knew I'd done him in, but,

being a good sport, he kept his word. Bill's part was so small it couldn't have damaged the play.

I wasn't in the last act of *Divided by Three,* so the night *Order Please* opened I rushed over to The Playhouse—made up and in costume—to see another Hopper light up the town.

Bill's Broadway career and the play were soon extinguished. But before *Order Please* ended its stillborn career, the author ran into Wolfie in front of the Lambs Club and said expectantly, "What did you think of your son's performance in my play?"

"Why, I haven't seen it," Wolfie replied. "Should I?"

Then, in no uncertain terms, Carpenter told him why he should, and without delay; seats would be arranged. After being properly persuaded, Wolfie went, saw, and listened.

The following morning he telephoned me and said, "Elda" —after so many years he'd forgotten my name—"you've got to do something about Bill's speech! It's horrible. I couldn't understand one word out of ten. You've got to correct that."

For the first time in our long and varied careers—together or apart—I was rendered absolutely speechless. When I had recovered I let him have both barrels of the gun. I pointed out to him how many times he had given voice instruction to young actors whom he didn't even like; how he'd slaved over them—and none bore the name of Hopper. That Wolfie, with the greatest flow of perfect English I've ever listened to, should be telling *me*—Elda Furry from Altoona—to teach *our* son to speak English was more than I could bear!

I can hear him laugh still. When he'd finished, his sense of fair play told him how right I was. But he never did offer to help Bill. What he said was, "I'll take this matter up the next time I see him."

That was my last conversation with De Wolf Hopper.

A year later, September 23, 1935, he died in Kansas City, Missouri, at the age of seventy-seven. He'd finished a broadcast the afternoon before his death. When he was ready for bed he read the baseball scores in the newspapers, and died as he always said he would, without pain, without trouble, and almost instantly. Just as his mother had done before him.

He always used to say, "She was such a good woman. She deserved her peaceful end. She just went to sleep one night and never woke up."

Wolfie's friends had worried for years about his color. His complexion was a dull gray, and where the lines of age were etched deepest around his eyes and mouth his color

was gray mixed with purple. "He looked," his friends said, "as though he had a frightful heart condition." To me he looked as though someone had thrown ashes in his face.

The story of how he got that coloring was so like him. Wolfie was as strong as Atlas, and often boasted that he'd never spent a day in bed because of sickness. He had only one fear: that he might lose his voice. If that went, there went his livelihood.

He did the most absurd things to keep from catching cold. To keep that golden organ working like a well-oiled watch, he gargled with argyrol. A doctor told him to use a ten-per-cent solution of it, but Wolfie, being an extremist in everything, figured fifty per cent would be more effective. And, instead of spitting out the gargle, he would swallow it. "Because," he said, "if there happens to be a germ lower down, it will kill that too, so I've taken care of two birds with one swallow."

When his color grew so bad that even he became aware of it, he went to various doctors. One M.D., after exhaustive examinations, said, "You're the healthiest man I've ever seen. Why, I'd be proud to be your son when you're seventy-five!"

That was a pretty speech, but it still didn't explain the color. Finally a German stomach specialist solved the riddle. After putting him through all kinds of physical exercise, which Wolfie loathed, the doctor finally asked if he'd been taking any medicine. Had he used a spray, perhaps, for his nose or throat?

"Nothing," said Wolfie, "except argyrol." Then he described what he'd been doing for years.

At that the German doctor threw up his hands and said, "Ah, Mr. Hopper, you are the silver king!"

Argyrol contains mercury, and bits of silver had worked under his skin but couldn't get through the pores.

Did that stop Wolfie from using it? No!

Nearly fourteen hundred friends went to the Little Church Around the Corner in New York City to attend De Wolf Hopper's funeral. The church couldn't hold the crowd, which overflowed onto the streets outside. The Lambs Choir sang, and the honorary list of pallbearers was slightly smaller than William Randolph Hearst's.

I've always been grateful that Bill was in New York at the time. The ceremony confirmed his first impression of his father—that he was a great man.

The Boston *Transcript* paid Hopper this tribute:

His memory will survive and stand forth vivid and

picturesque as long as anybody remains who ever saw his huge bulk fill the stage or heard him give utterance to comic joy and grief.

Divided by Three ran eight weeks in New York.

During the last week I joined Elizabeth Arden. I can still laugh when I remember the expressions on customers' faces, people who had seen me on the stage the week before. One, a dowager who looked for all the world like Madame Knickerbocker, didn't mince words. "Hedda Hopper, what are you doing here?"

When I told her, she said, "You put on your hat and coat and get out of here now. You're an actress—this is no place for you."

She repeated that speech each time she came for treatments. When I finally left Arden's, she wrote to congratulate me. We corresponded until she died.

One night at Dinty Moore's, Irving Berlin asked me, "What're you doing?" When I told him, he repeated the dowager's very words. "You're an actress—get out of there at once. If you need money, I'll see to it. Would ten thousand tide you over?"

I stayed on, however, long enough to learn the beauty business. I'm glad I did. It's fabulous. The profits would stagger a maharajah.

The Arden saloon was exquisite. Dozens of times a day girls sprayed perfume through it. Elizabeth was pushing a new scent that year, Blue Grass, which, mingled with the fragrance of Easter lilies, was very beautiful and refreshing—especially when snow was flying outside.

Miss Arden's niece had an opportunity to make her social debut together with a friend from the Social Register some weeks after I started to work in the salon. Our plans for the flying business trip flew out the window while plans for the debut boiled over.

The affair was to be in the Ritz ballroom, and the right person had to be found to decorate it. Elizabeth said to me, "You know all the stage decorators. Suggest someone."

I did, but they were all out of town. All except Kate Lawson, ex-wife of playwright John Howard Lawson, and Donald Onsleger's assistant on the settings for *Divided by Three.* We got her.

I could see she made little impression on Miss A. as the requirements were explained. "I want something unusual," said the beauty expert who thrived on her own treatments. "The ballroom should be decorated, I think, in different-

colored cellophane. I want Prince of Wales feathers of cellophane twelve feet high in pale pink. That gold border at the top of the room must be covered over with cellophane ruffles." Then, fixing Kate with a baleful eye, she added, "I want something like the stage setting of Gertrude Stein's play *Four Saints in Three Acts*. But I don't suppose you ever saw it."

"I did it," Kate put in quietly. My eyebrows lifted at this. I hadn't known it either.

"Well," cried Liz, "what are we waiting for? Let's get over to the Ritz."

Kate did a grand job—if you like pink cellophane ruffles.

I was an hour late getting to Miss A.'s party. I had other work to do.

Elizabeth had an assistant who had started with her in a two-room flat. In their early days, when Elizabeth couldn't afford to pay her salary, this woman took a chance, so sure was she that Elizabeth Arden would become a great name in beauty. She had known the niece ever since the child was born; had helped bring her up. Everyone loved this woman, not only the salon personnel but all the customers.

She wasn't invited to the party.

I understood how hurt she was. So the night of the party I said, "I'm going to see that you get home, but before then I want to show you something."

We went to the Ritz in a taxi. Kate and her helpers were putting the finishing touches on the room. I showed the woman where Miss Arden, her niece, and the other girl would stand in the receiving line; the bars, the buffet, the decorations. Then I took her into the garden room. We drank two sherries each, and she went home in a mellow mood.

I was late for the party and was reprimanded for it, but I didn't explain to my hostess why I was delayed.

Elizabeth wasn't all business. I discovered one day when I was riding with her in her car that she had a devastating sense of humor. She glanced at her chauffeur and asked, "Haven't I seen you before?" (She'd engaged him just that morning.)

"Yes, Miss Arden."

"You drove my friend, Mrs. So-and-So, perhaps?"

"No, Miss Arden."

"Of course, I remember now. It was Mrs. So-and-so, who recommended you——"

"No, Miss Arden."

"Well, who recommended you?"

"No one, Miss Arden. I'm the man you fired four weeks ago."

She enjoyed the joke as much as I did, and he remained in her employ for many years.

It was then I told her of a beauty treatment I had witnessed in a large room at the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studio. One hundred girls in a huge room typing out words of love. It was a year when love stories on the screen had lines waiting outside the box offices.

The word "love" was a great aid to beauty. Those girls, as they typed stories about boy meets girl and vice versa, must have been picturing themselves playing those scenes. Their faces were such a study of happiness, they didn't need the laying on of hands or lotions.

In my own case I knew this to be true. I had played so many mean parts on the screen, I knew that when you're angry all the lines in your face go down. In anger you look ten years older. But when you're thinking of love, your eyes light up and the corners of your mouth go up in a smile.

On the road from Hollywood to MGM there was a long stretch of meadow, filled with meadow larks every spring. I'd always slow down on this stretch of road because I loved those bird songs. Once I happened to catch my image in the car mirror and noticed my expression—all the lines were up. I looked like a girl again. It gave me an idea; so on long rides, whether I was worried or sad, I exercised those face muscles and smiled even when there was nothing to smile about.

On good days, when I look at myself, I think those exercises are still working overtime for me.

Yes, I learned that there is more to the beauty business than creams and lotions and massages. There's psychology—in great hunks. The tough cases were sent to me.

Once I was called in to consult with a dear little dried-up old woman whose face looked like the crisscrossed network of the Pennsylvania Railroad tracks at Altoona.

"My husband was ill for ten years," she explained to me diffidently. "We couldn't afford a nurse. I nursed him night and day before he died. You see, my son is engaged to a beautiful girl; her mother is beautiful too. That mother is five years older than I, but I look thirty years older. Before the wedding I have exactly one month to make my face presentable so my son won't be ashamed of me when I stand beside him." She looked at me wistfully. "Is there anything you can do for me?" she asked.

After I'd got rid of the lump in my throat, we went to

work. I told her story to our best operator. This was something special. We were going to save a woman's pride.

Those blessed girls worked as I've never seen anyone work before or since. Liz never knew anything about it, but that woman received three months' work, crammed with love into one month. Payment? Tears of gratitude and an invitation to her son's wedding.

That was the year Arden's brocaded party bags sold for twenty dollars apiece. She couldn't patent them, and lo, Saks came up with them for $5.95.

As she and I were walking through Saks—I'd helped her choose a couple of hats—we passed the bag department. Liz said, "Wait a minute." She asked the salesgirl for an Elizabeth Arden evening bag. They brought her one. She looked it over, said, "Have you anything else?"

"Oh yes," replied the girl, "we have one just as good for $5.95."

To this day when Adam Gimbel remembers what Elizabeth said to him an hour later over the telephone, his collar feels too tight for him.

Elizabeth would spend one thousand dollars to put on a show, but she wouldn't pay twenty dollars a week extra for a maid. So when Christmas came we all pitched in and worked like slaves. I stayed after hours to help wrap packages. At the last minute Mrs. John Schiff came in and bought twenty bags that had to be wrapped. She asked me the usual question: "Didn't I see you on the stage a few weeks ago?"

I was too tired to go into it, so I put on a blank expression and answered, "Stage? What stage?" She left with a puzzled look on her pretty face, and I turned to and wrapped her Christmas packages.

The employees always gave Miss A. a big party on Christmas Eve. By the time she blew in for it I'd been working so hard I'd forgotten to renew my make-up. "You look horrible," she announced.

I looked in a mirror and agreed. And in that split second I knew I'd had enough beauty business to last me a lifetime. I didn't stay for her party, but went to my hotel and sent her a telegram of resignation and wished her a Merry Christmas.

At eight o'clock that Christmas morning she was on the phone. "You can't do this to me!" she cried. "We haven't done the things I'd planned."

"That's not my fault."

"You're tired," she persisted on the telephone. "You had no right to work yourself into a collapse."

"I'm not collapsed," I said. "I simply couldn't see your wonderful girls work so hard without pitching in to help. You wouldn't get an extra maid, so we wrapped the packages. You have my resignation."

"You're tired," she repeated. "Go down to my place in South Carolina and rest for a month. We'll talk things over then——"

"You don't understand. I'm full of beauty business up to here. Good-by, and a Merry Christmas."

It's difficult for a woman worth millions not to get her own way. Once, while visiting her at Saratoga Springs, we watched the early morning workout of her horses.

The same day she took the exercise men off her horses, claiming they were too heavy. She wasn't going to have the backs of her horses bowed by men; she wanted boys. I got out in the nick of time while my back was still straight and unsprung.

But I must admit if I'd owned those thoroughbreds I would have wanted boys to ride them instead of overgrown men. The success of Liz's stable proves she must have been right.

She was right about many things. A brilliant executive, Elizabeth Arden has succeeded in everything she's undertaken. She understands the foibles of women. Her exercise rooms are things of beauty. As you lean back in the chair to have sweet-scented lotions rubbed into your skin, your eyes rest on a fresh rose in a crystal vase. You look through chiffon curtains, which screen out the dust and dirt of the city. After an hour of relaxation in Arden's salon you're bound to look more beautiful. Yes, there are showmen in other businesses besides motion pictures.

Elizabeth had established her Maine Chance Farm, where tired beauties paid five hundred dollars a week for refresher courses in diet, form, and the body beautiful. Every kind of treatment was available to her patrons. Horses to ride, swimming instructors, bridge lessons. The diet was rigid, a combination of birdseed, all kinds of greens, and non-fattening juices. No spirituous liquids were allowed inside the place except during Miss Arden's annual party for the Democrats. Well, you may ask what I was doing there. I was a guest and knew nothing about this Democratic whoop-de-do until it happened.

Elizabeth had taken over Elisabeth Marbury's old house and added it to her own holdings. She took along with it Elisabeth's traditional party for the Democrats.

About three hundred came. Some Republicans too. It was at Maine Chance Farm that I first met Rudy Vallee's roly-poly father.

Liz sent chefs, cooks by the dozen, and all kinds of help to prepare a gigantic luncheon. It was great.

During the festivities in the garden I heard a hiss from an upstairs window. I risked a peek, and there, leaning out, were Constance and Norma Talmadge, and Constance Carver, ex-wife of Adolphe Menjou. When they got my eye they jerked their thumbs up, whispering hoarsely, "Come up! Come up!"

I looked around for my hostess. She was nowhere in sight, so I went upstairs to learn that my friends had been there ten days. They were bursting to tell me a yarn.

Having had just enough food during their stay to maintain life, when they smelled turkeys, hams, and chickens roasting, pastry baking—all those delicious smells from the kitchen—they went beserk.

Waiting till all the help had gone to bed, they sneaked down to the kitchen and stole a whole turkey, took it back to their rooms, and ate it. Now they were trying to figure a way to get rid of the carcass.

Then someone remembered seeing a shovel leaning against a tool shed in the back yard. So they sneaked downstairs when everything was quiet, got the shovel, stole into the woods across the highway, dug a hole, buried the evidence, sneaked back, went to bed—and had the first good night's sleep since their crime.

23

Sadder for the failure of the play, and wiser from my bout with the beauty business, I came home. It was always Hollywood—do or die. I've done and I've died there too. And when the final roll call comes, I hope it will find me there. No matter what you say about the town, and anything you say probably is true, there's never been another like it.

A million dreams are fulfilled every day and a million hopes shattered. But if you have guts enough to stick it out,

and even a modicum of ability, you'll wear down Hollywood's resistance.

Smart writers never understand why their satires on our town are never successful. What they refuse to accept is that you can't satirize a satire.

Moss Hart's *Once in a Lifetime* came the nearest to doing a good job on us. But nothing Moss dreamed up in the play compared with his reception in the movie capital. Sid Grauman produced the play in Hollywood. The only reason he got away with it was because he was everybody's friend and all his pals wanted to see him succeed.

Grauman wired Moss not to bother about transportation from the Pasadena station to Hollywood; he'd arrange it. What he'd arranged was an armored truck to transport Moss from the station to town, thus keeping him safe from some irate star or producer or director lampooned in *Once in a Lifetime*.

Sid claimed Hollywood was so incensed over the play that someone might take a shot at the author. Moss was appalled and declined, hired his own taxi, and rode unharmed into the film capital.

When I reached home again I found the town decorated with many new old faces—all playing the parts I'd have had if MGM still had me under contract.

I went calling on Rufus Le Maire, head of MGM's casting department. I guess he thought it was just a social visit, for he began by asking, "See anybody in New York with real acting talent?"

"Uh-huh. Jimmy Stewart," I said, and described his performance in *Divided by Three*.

"Where can I get him?" asked Rufus. Before I left the office a telegram was dispatched to Jimmy in care of Guthrie McClintic in New York. Five weeks later I welcomed Jimmy to Hollywood.

As there was no job for me at MGM, I went prospecting once more among the independents. They didn't help your career, but they paid good money. Independent films were the ones actors tolerated while waiting for epics. Sometimes a sleeper got through, turning out better than an A picture. Nowadays many independents are far better than major studio products.

Phil Goldstone and Joe Rock were two producers I could always depend on. When the going got tough, I'd call them and they'd say, "Come along." They were not only buying me for one thousand dollars for the picture, but my ward-

robe as well, which always dressed up a scene without extra cost to the producer.

I needed a good shot in the arm. What, I asked myself, was this radio I'd been hearing so much about? A friend of mine from San Francisco was a radio agent, so I appealed to her. She went to work on several deals, one of which almost came through. Ironically, it was the old "Hollywood Hotel" program which finally went to Louella Parsons. It was hoped that with her influence she could get stars to appear for nothing. She did.

My agent friend kept saying, "You should meet Dema Harshbarger."

"Who's she?"

"She's one of the most important women in town, and heads the artists' bureau at NBC." Then my agent told me the story of Dema, who hatched the idea of civic music on a national scale and sold it to four hundred cities over the country. For her civic music dream an angel was necessary. With unerring instinct she picked the man with the most money, Samuel Insull. She didn't know him; he'd never heard of her. But both lived in Chicago. It took a heap of plottin', but she gained entrance to his private office, laid her scheme before him, and walked out with a check for fifty thousand dollars on the strict understanding that no one must know he was backing the project.

Civic Music became so big that the National Broadcasting Company had to buy it. They needed Dema's artists for radio, so they bought her out for a quarter of a million. Then, on an off-chance that she might inaugurate another such plan, they offered her the job as head of the NBC Artist Bureau, with headquarters in Hollywood. But NBC didn't even have an office there. She established one in Hollywood by taking a room in the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel, then waited a year before the network acquired unpretentious offices on Melrose Avenue near the Paramount Studio.

After hearing the story I said, "Well, why not introduce me?"

"She's very difficult to meet," said my friend. "But I'll see what I can do." Several times she was on the verge of making the introduction, but always the plan fell through. After many disappointments I said, "Now look. What goes on with this Dema Harshbarger?"

"Well," she answered, "she really doesn't want to meet you."

"Hmmmmmm," I said, "is that so?"

Without saying anything to the agent, I barged into Dema's office on Melrose.

Her private secretary, Mrs. Suzie Traynor, said briskly, "Have you an appointment with Miss Harshbarger?"

"No."

"You'll have to make one."

"Now listen, miss. I know she's in that room. I hear her voice. The secretary hasn't been born that can keep me from going in."

My voice must have been loud, because the door flew open and there stood a woman five feet four, solidly built from the ground up, with short white hair and the snappingest black eyes I've ever looked into—except once, years later—when we had our one and only quarrel. Her eyes weren't black then; they were lumps of TNT.

I introduced myself and was invited in. "What can I do for you?" she asked.

"I want to get on that air!" I demanded.

"Well," she said calmly, "what've you got to give it?"

That stopped me for a minute, then I started to tell her stories of Hollywood. Not the kind that appear on the screen, but real ones. After half an hour she said, "You've told me more about this town than I've learned in a year." Then, leaning back in her chair, she asked, "Where do you come from?"

"Altoona, Pennsylvania."

"What did your father do?"

"What's that got to do with it?" I asked.

"Nothing. Just thought I'd ask."

"Well, if you must know, my father was a butcher."

"Mine was a horse trader," she said. Then she leaned across the desk, put out her hand, and said, "Shake. We should get on all right. I'll see what I can do for you."

She put my name on her NBC list, submitted it to the New York brass, and got back a sassy note. "This is a business of youth," they wrote. "No room for a 'has-been'!"

I laugh quietly to myself when I look at some of the high-bracket television shows on the networks today. TV appears to be the permanent home of every "has-been" on the stage, screen, and radio.

That "has-been" crack made Harshbarger mad. She looked around for a sponsor.

Things kept looking black until up bobbed my friend Frances Marion with a proposition. She was going to England, at a cushy salary, to put James Hilton's novel *Knight without Armor* into script form for Marlene Dietrich. Why didn't I

come along? She was taking her secretary and two sons.

"Maybe you can get a job in England," Frances said. "I'll have a house; you can live with me. It won't cost you anything."

Too providential an offer to turn down.

En route to New York I received a telegram from Dema, telling me she'd booked me a guest spot in New York with Rudy Vallee. Rudy was big-time and I was thrilled. The spot didn't turn out as big as I'd hoped. I had to share my time with Milton Berle, whose mother ignited his applause in the audience. Hopper? I had not even an acquaintance, let alone a friend, there.

It proved one thing, though. I'd been right about Dema Harshbarger. She was the kind of woman you couldn't forget because she remembered you.

Frances and I made the first trip out of New York on the *Queen Mary*. On board were Irene Dunne, her mother and husband Dr. Frank Griffin, Tony and Renee DeMarco, Carl Brisson, Jack Buchanan, and Joan Bennett, who hid behind dark glasses. Lord Dudley also was aboard.

The day we landed, Lord Dudley got haughty with a cameraman who attempted to take a picture of him with Miss Bennett. In London I never saw them together. Her escort there was Walter Wanger.

We arrived in London in time for the opening of *Showboat,* starring Irene Dunne and Paul Robeson. Irene's trunks hadn't arrived, but she made an appearance on stage in street clothes. Robeson was immaculate in white tie and tails, and looked down his nose at her.

Later he danced cheek to cheek with a titled English woman at the Dorchester Hotel.

The person who looked down on me most was the maître-d' at the Savoy Hotel. He stopped me at the entrance to the restaurant, murmuring stiffly, "I'm afraid you can't go in, madame."

"Why not? I'm living here," I said. I'd passed my Savoy Hotel entrance exams years before.

"It's not you—it's your hat, madame. Ladies wearing hats aren't permitted here at this hour."

"My friends are waiting for me."

"You may join them—if you remove your hat."

I can wear a hat or take it off, but either way it's a conversation piece. I took it off but told about it, so the next day controversy buzzed in London. May a lady have supper at a smart restaurant wearing a hat, or not? Headwaiters wanted to know who made the rule. Were fresh roses or

orchids pinned in your hair a hat, or did it have to have a brim?

Quite a tempest over a topper. Hopper was like a cat with a special dividend of Devonshire cream. I made the front pages.

Frances found a house near Regent's Park and plunged into work on the script. She was so busy she forgot I was there, holed up at the Savoy. But my friendly clerk was still around, so I explained my predicament.

"How much can you afford?" he asked.

"Four dollars a day," I replied. It rocked him, but he carried on bravely.

"Do you mind living on the top floor? I've a sunny room there with two windows. The surrounding rooms are occupied by maids and valets of rich Americans, but you'll find a private bath at the end of the corridor."

"I don't mind," I said. I was determined to have fun, so, putting my worries out of sight, I motored through the cathedral country with Ann Harding, who happened to be in England making a picture. She had the car, I had the impulse, and we shared the costs. I walked the legs off her. We saw every cathedral in England, and how beautiful they are!

People invited me to represent American actresses at benefit garden parties, after our biggest stars had turned them down. I accepted right and left. I saw much beauty and made many friends.

When the British took sanctions off Italy, I had a seat in the Speaker's Gallery in the House of Commons. It was exciting to watch Winston Churchill shake his fist under the nose of the Ramsay MacDonald group and roar, "This action is one of the most cowardly the Empire has ever lent itself to. What we've done today may well lead to another war!"

Nancy Astor rose to her feet twelve times. The other members of Parliament, whom she scandalized anyway, were determined not to let her get her voice into the Italian debate, and, by Jove, she didn't.

The show was better than a prize fight. When it was over I begged my friend Thelma Cazalet to let me come back the following day. She stared at me in amazement. "You think it's like this every day?"

"Isn't it?"

"Never since I've been an M.P. have I known a day in Parliament like this. I hope there'll never be another."

Instead of letting Thelma drive me back to the hotel, I

insisted upon walking through the crowds. It was a rewarding experience. The people at that time all but worshiped Edward VIII. A charwoman with a mangy gray dog tied to the end of a rope was trotting along in step. The pet stepped down into the gutter and started to drink some dirty water. The woman jerked him back to the sidewalk, shook her finger over his head, and said, "You naughty dog! Would the King's pet act like that?"

I can tell her the King's dogs don't act like that. Every spring when I pay a visit to New York, I see the ex-King walking his two pets at 1:30 A.M. on the sidewalks of New York outside the Waldorf-Astoria, where he lives. They're old, tired, and one has cataracts clouding its eyes.

It seemed I could drink in the wonders of England and still live in a hall bedroom at the Savoy!

There was a lighter side too. I went "antique-ing" all over England with New York decorator Pierre Dutel. We visited Bristol, where I learned the history of the lovely city that took such a beating in World War II, and where the glass I love so much originated. Back in London I received an invitation to the plush annual Actors Ball.

"I must have something to wear that will stand out in that crowd," I warned Pierre.

"I have it," he cried. "We'll make you a lei of deep blue hydrangeas." The time was then well along—seven o'clock the night of the ball. All the florists shops were closed. But we were inspired.

We taxied around to Covent Garden market, where the fresh morning flowers were coming in by lorry. Sure enough, there were some luscious plants of growing hydrangeas, with great huge blooms. The cockney drivers saw no need to speed things up for a couple of crazy Americans, so we had to wait till everything was properly unloaded and placed in the market before we could buy two dozen plants.

We piled them in a taxi and tore off for the Savoy. Borrowing a ball of twine from the porter, we went to work.

By late evening it was finished. I've never seen a more beautiful lei. I hustled into a black gown with rows and rows of fringe and strung the lei around my neck. It reached to my knees. A duke whom I'd met in Hollywood danced by, winked at me, and gave me a shy smile. We both remembered an incident which had happened the last time he visited our town.

He had met Kay Francis at a party and got her confused with another famous gal named Francis. One night he ap-

peared at Kay's bungalow. The door was open, and he saw a lady sitting inside wearing a kimono. She saw a gentleman and said, "Come in."

There stood the duke. Kay was still in make-up after the day's work and was enjoying a highball with her husband Norman Foster, whom she introduced.

The duke looked at his hostess and said, "You're not Madam Francis?"

"No," she said. "I'm Kay Francis, the actress."

"I'm sorry, but I've come to the wrong house," he said as he blushed and stumbled out into the night with their peals of laughter following him.

My lei was a sensation. I was noticed by several stage producers and picture directors. But—no job offers. I didn't think about it until later, but, come to find out, I looked so blooming rich no one dared offer me a character woman's salary! Even then no Englishman wanted to upset international relations.

Frances Marion had to stay in England longer than expected. She wanted her boys Fred and Dick Thompson back in Hollywood for the opening of school and asked if I would chaperone them home. They were young, frisky, and a handful, but off we went.

Traveling by the same boat were Frances Brokaw and Henry Fonda, who had met in London where Hank had made a picture. She was madly in love with him. I doubt if she let go his hand more than five minutes all the way across.

Carmel Snow was on board too. The editor of *Harper's Bazaar* gave me a questioning look—didn't quite recognize me. Though I hadn't forgotten, she did not remember that at the request of her brother Tom White, a wonderful man, I had given her a party at my little house on Fairfax where she was introduced to stars, designers, and all the people she wanted to meet.

But on board the boat from Europe, I found Carmel Snow's memory as small as my house where she first had met the cream of the Hollywood crop by her own planning.

I delivered the boys to their school. After Frances finished the screenplay on *Knight without Armor*—which incidentally laid a real bomb—she invited the author James Hilton and his wife to visit her in Hollywood. The Hiltons didn't wait for a second bid, but came a-running.

Frances helped Jimmy to get his writing contract at Metro, which paid him an astronomical salary for years.

She also turned over her own bedroom, dressing room, sit-

ting room, and bath to them. Frances' cook Sigrid was the finest in Hollywood, and Jimmy made up for all the eating he'd missed at home. Three abundant meals a day were cooked, served, and eaten to the last crumb. Parties were given constantly for Hilton's English friends.

Alexander Woollcott, who was largely responsible for the American success of Hilton's book *Goodbye, Mr. Chips,* arrived in town as the star of George S. Kaufman's play *The Man Who Came to Dinner.* When Alex read *Mr. Chips* he began praising it to the skies on the air and in magazine articles. He even wrote a biographical story on Hilton. He'd exchanged letters with the author, but wanted to talk with him in person and demanded that I arrange a meeting.

I said I'd phone Frances Marion and ask her to give a dinner party for him.

"I don't care to meet Miss Marion," Alex said bluntly; "I don't care to meet Hilton's wife. All I'm interested in," roared the autocrat of the Algonquin, "is meeting James Hilton. If you can't arrange it, don't bother. I'll get someone else to do it."

Well, that being what Alex wanted, that's what he got. Then started a Hilton gab about Woollcott. The two-man fan club reached such proportions that if you hadn't known better you'd have thought they were both raised in the same nest.

The Hiltons took over Frances' home. They stayed on and on. Weeks ran into months. Wistfully, occasionally wrathfully, Fanny began wanting her bed back. "Hedda," she said, "do something!"

"You asked them," I said. "It's got nothing to do with me."

"Yes, but you'll know how to get them out. I don't." There was I, an exterminator for a British author.

"Okay, I'll try. But don't blame me if it backfires."

I was living in my own tiny house three blocks from Frances' big one, so I arranged that Jimmy should walk me home. As we trotted along my eye lit on a "For Rent" sign on a small English cottage. I stopped and examined it conspicuously. "I know this house," I said to Jimmy. "It would be charming for you and Alice. You'd be close enough to dine with Frances and come down and see me too. And we could continue our walks together."

Jimmy turned an astonished gaze on me. "Do you think we ought to leave Frances?" he asked, as though he couldn't believe his ears.

"It might be a nice thing to do. Give her a chance to sleep in her own bed for a change."

"You know," he said thoughtfully, "it's never occurred to Alice or me."

Within the week they were in a hotel apartment and Fanny had her bed back.

She and I took the Hiltons to a Russian Easter party at the Max Rabinovitch home. We'd been to many such parties there. If you've never seen one, and you get the chance, don't miss it. Any Russian will tell you that all Russians are crazy; but you'll never see such dancing, eating, drinking, or hear such music and singing.

Nina Koshetz was at the piano, singing as only she can. Everybody joined in. The tables sagged with the most exotic foods, replenished every hour on the hour. The Russians, even when they sing loudest, never stop eating.

Our hostess, a beautiful redhead, was charming to everyone, including the Hiltons.

Jimmy whispered to me, "At last my dreams are fulfilled. I always wanted to meet a redheaded Russian."

At dawn, when Frances and I were ready to leave, he stayed. After that he kept going back. The Russian redhead divorced her music-maestro husband Max, and Alice divorced Jimmy. Then Jimmy married his dream girl.

It was all ludicrously friendly. Jimmy bought a home, moved in both Galena and his former wife Alice, who had been his secretary. For a long time they lived happily under the same roof. Alice made the beds and kept the house clean while Galena cooked. Now Jimmy and his redhead are divorced; have been for a long time. Once I asked her what broke up their marriage.

"Jimmy's appetite," she said frankly. "I could no longer bear watching him eat three enormous meals a day. If you must know, I couldn't stand having to cook them either!"

Jimmy made a fortune in movies; he's making another fortune in radio. He's a fine writer. But if Alex Woollcott hadn't taken a shine to him and shouted his praises from the housetops, if Frances Marion hadn't gotten him a job writing at MGM and invited him to be a long-term house guest, Jimmy might easily still be in England teaching at a boys' school for fifteen hundred dollars a year.

There are so many "ifs" in Hollywood, and now and then a wonderful "when."

24

After returning from England, where I'd met some of their finest citizens and watched their courage as they carried on in the face of handicaps, my mental attitude changed. Sure, I had to get out and begin the weary task of hunting a job. But, having mingled with the best, I took on some of their shine and held my head higher.

I've found that your mental attitude—good or bad—adds to or subtracts from your bank account. If you act confident, certain people come to believe you're superior. It helps—especially in show business.

My mental barometer indicated a change for me, just as Wolfie's pet corn used to warn him of coming storms and dampness.

My first stop was at Dema Harshbarger's office. She had been talking me up during my absence, and, glory be! had Maro-Oil Shampoo interested in backing a fifteen-minute gossip program. If she could sell Mr. Maro on me, we would be in.

We were warned that the sponsor had to be treated with rare delicacy. He was deaf, and sensitive about it, so it was up to us to raise our voices but not let him know *we knew* he was hard of hearing.

I made sure of one thing. If he couldn't hear me, he was going to see me. I was ready for him in a bright red coachman's coat of suède and a jaunty black sports hat decorated with bird-of-paradise feathers. I knew the combination was outrageous, but I was determined to make an impression.

The stage was set; the great man came. The job we did in that hour could be used as a model of salesmanship for any business. The poor man scarcely finished a sentence. When Dema's voice grew tired, I took over. We bellowed like a couple of wounded buffalos. As our voices grew louder his became softer.

No one could have resisted us. Dema and I had to win, and no man, not even a deaf one, was going to defeat us.

We wore him down. Rather timidly he said "yes" to our demands and promised to send over a contract. When he left, we fell back in our chairs—hoarse but happy.

Not until the same man arrived with the contract did we

discover that he was the advertising agency representative whose hearing was perfect—and not the sponsor at all!

I'd been too long away from Wolfie's constant reminders about my speech. There is a happy medium between Altoona and Boston, but I got nowhere near it on the air. My phony British accent was about as appealing as a hog caller at a tea party. I was terrible! After three months not even Dema could yell loud enough to get the contract renewed.

She decided that the cure for my affectation was a show called *Brenthouse* in which I played a hard-working lawyer with two children to support. During a year in *Brenthouse* I sandpapered some of the sophistication out of my voice.

But it was Ken Carpenter who finished the job. We sold prunes on a gossip show twice a week, and I defy anybody to be phony around Ken. I'm certain some of his naturalness rubbed off on Bing Crosby, whose show he has announced for years.

Ken was very kind about my speech and tried to cheer me up by recounting how dreadful Frank Morgan was on his first air show. "Why, he was so bad," Ken added, "that his first two contracts were canceled. But when he hit his stride, no one outdistanced him."

In show business it's always feast or famine. If you have a job, another bobs up. The logic being that if you're working, you're good; if you're idle, you must be bad.

I couldn't beat the system. I'd wait months between jobs, then get two or three offers at once. Not pushing my luck by waiting to see if a better one might follow, I always took the first one. You can't lose that way, but it sure wilts your bargaining power.

I'd no sooner secured my radio job when I was given a part in *Artists and Models* with Jack Benny and Ida Lupino. During this hitch I got to know and like Ida real well. She'd been brought over from England to star in *Alice in Wonderland*, but with blind foresight we gave the part to an unknown who's still unknown, and Ida was given tough, hard dames to play. She was a cute, fluffy blonde with delicate features which almost disappeared under the weight of her hair. While she enjoyed a good contract at Paramount which paid her $1,750 a week, her parts kept getting slimmer and worse. I thought she was wasting her talent.

When we had a three-hour wait during a night-club scene when we should have been listening to Andre Kostelanetz' music, we exchanged confidences about our careers. Never loath to give advice, I asked why she didn't give up these silly parts and do some real ones.

"Money doesn't grow on trees," she pointed out. "For everything you get, you have to give up something. That applies to cash too."

"All right," I said importantly. "But if this keeps up, I doubt if you'll get another contract. Why don't you dye your hair back to its natural shade and go dramatic?"

Weeks after the picture ended and we'd gone our separate ways, a red light stopped us abreast in traffic. Ida leaned out of her car and yelled, "Congratulate me. I've done it!"

"Done what?" I yelled back.

"Canceled my contract."

Be darned if she hadn't. Ida gave up a year's salary at $1,750 per week, then waited twelve months without work before getting up nerve enough to ask director Bill Wellman for a chance at a dramatic role with Ronald Colman in *The Light That Failed*. Bill, being the kind of guy he is, which in my book is mighty good, said, "Okay, kid, I'll help you. We'll make a test. If you're as good as you think you are, I'll give you the part."

That picture started Ida up the ladder, and she's never taken a downward step since.

If I'd been as willing to take advice as I was to give it, I might have saved myself lots of worry. While week-ending with Mrs. Harry Ham, who later became Lady Sharp, at her ranch near Arrowhead Springs in the early twenties, a guest read my palm. After looking at my hand, she got her glasses out of her purse and looked again. "My dear girl," she exclaimed, "you're in the wrong business! You're not an actress (she wasn't alone in her opinion); you're a writer."

"And you're nuts!" I laughed.

"No—here, I'll show you. You've got a fate line running the whole length of your palm, with two forks. I've never seen lines like these except in authors' hands. You probably won't start until you're nearing fifty, but writing will bring you greater success than you've yet enjoyed, and will continue until the end of your days. You'll die writing."

"I hope," I said flippantly, "there'll be enough left to dictate my epitaph."

"And what would that be?" she asked.

"I kept de Wolf from my door."

"Seriously now," she cautioned, "you should write."

If Mrs. Turner reads this, I hope she'll get in touch with me. There's one prophet I'd like to reward. My hand has been pawed and pored over by experts. She was an amateur, but she sure knew her lines.

25

Writing a column is the only job ever handed to me on a silver platter. I'd worked so hard finding picture parts that many times I pushed my luck away from me. The need was so great I couldn't relax. This, I've learned, is the worst method—being overanxious. But I didn't discover it until I was pushing sixty.

I didn't grasp it at the time, but I can thank Cissy Patterson for starting me off on my writing career.

Cissy was a great woman—rich, powerful, important—who could have sat back and lived a life of ease, but who worked as hard as, if not harder than, any of her employees. At the time of which I write, Cissy was running the Washington *Herald* for William Randolph Hearst. She later bought the paper and willed it to seven employees, who, many months after her death, sold it to Colonel Robert R. McCormick, who owns and publishes "The World's Greatest Newspaper," the Chicago *Tribune*.

The sudden death of Cissy's best friend, Evelyn Walsh McLean, I'm certain hastened Cissy's end. The last time I saw her she was blaming herself for leaving Evelyn to attend a directors' meeting of the Chicago *Tribune*-New York *Daily News* Syndicate in New York. Evelyn had begged her not to go. Cissy told me it was during her absence that Evelyn took an overdose of sleeping pills.

When Cissy was Mr. Hearst's associate, we were both guests at Wyntoon. After listening in on a conversation about Hollywood stars, Cissy said to me, "Why don't you write that?"

"Write?" I exclaimed. "I can't even spell!"

"You don't have to spell. If you write as well as you talk, you could do a column. Tell you what you do. When you go home, dictate a letter to me. If I like it I'll pay you fifty dollars for it."

Cissy liked it. For four months I sent her one a week. Then she wrote that the paper was suffering an economy wave and could pay me only thirty-five dollars. By that time I was a writer and turned her down. I blush to think of it now. I've learned since not to judge newspaper salaries by our movie standards.

Then in 1937, Howard Denby, representing Esquire Fea-

tures, asked for an interview. Howard Denby and Esquire Features meant nothing to me, so I asked, "Why?"

"I've searched for a year trying to find a woman to write a Hollywood column that we can syndicate. Today Andy Hervey, in MGM's publicity department, said, 'I don't know whether Hedda Hopper can write, but when we want the low-down on our stars, we get it from her.' "

I sent Mr. Denby some samples of my yarns. One was on Alice Brady; another about the house Jack Gilbert built. I described the living room, which he'd painted blood red. It had a four-foot frieze around the top featuring crests of titled Englishmen. That frieze reminded me of a line in *The Pirates of Penzance*. After the major general bought a castle which included a chapel, he looked at the tombstones and said, "I don't know whose ancestors these *were*, but I do know whose ancestors they *are*."

I signed with Esquire and the column began by appearing in thirteen papers. The first one to buy was the Los Angeles *Times*.

The Norman Chandlers, owners of the *Times*, had long been friends of mine, and no one would believe that I hadn't made use of their friendship to promote a sale. The Chandlers knew nothing about it until L. D. Hotchkiss, managing editor of the paper, sent the sample columns upstairs with a note that if Mr. Chandler agreed, he'd like to add it to the paper.

Hotch had listened to my radio program while driving home from work. "If she ever writes a column," he remarked to himself, "I want to read it; I might even buy it."

The first time I ever saw a newspaper office was when I called on Mr. Hotchkiss. I'd phoned to thank him for buying my column and starting me in my home town. "Why don't you come down and let me look at you?" he said.

"I will." My glasses were broken, so I shoved a lorgnette in my bag, which reminded me of the column I'd written on Alice Brady, so I slipped that one in too.

I had no idea what bearding a managing editor in his den would be like. I found it a pleasant surprise. Hotch inspired me with confidence, so I dragged out my precious words on Alice Brady. He reached out for it, but the actress asserted herself. "I'll read it to you," I said. Fishing out my lorgnette, I read—with gestures.

I got too involved in my pear-shaped tones to notice how amused he was. Later he told me he nearly split his G string.

It was the *Times* custom, before taking on a new feature, to send a copy of the material to all department heads with a

memo requesting their reactions. One opinion surprised even Hotch.

"Would you like to see it?" he asked.

"I sure would." The letter is still in my possession. I won't embarrass the gentleman who wrote it by naming him, but it ran something like this:

> Badly written. No news value. Might be all right for a small-town weekly. Has nothing to offer a great Metropolitan newspaper like the *Times*.

If he'd damned me with faint praise, Hotch might have listened, but the guy murdered me. So Mr. Hotchkiss became my champion.

When we were both in New York for the publishers' convention a year later, I met Hotch in the lobby of the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel and explained that Esquire had invited me on to drum up business.

"You go on up to the Esquire room," said Hotchkiss, "and I'll stay downstairs and shill for you. I'll send up the managing editors I know. After you get 'em, sell 'em."

When he'd flushed up about fifteen, he came himself to see how I was doing. The room was so small that not only was there no place for Hotch to sit, but no room for the prospects he'd sent on ahead. We stood up and made our deals.

Afterward Hotch invited me to dine with Norman Chandler and himself. We had a barrel of fun until we reached El Morocco. Tallulah Bankhead materialized and introduced us to her new husband John Emery with a description of his assets that covered all three of us with blushes, including Emery, who grabbed her by the arm and led her away.

Later Hotch came across a photograph of the three of us taken that night at El Morocco. He couldn't resist sending it upstairs to his boss Norman after underlining in red the caption:

"Hedda Hopper and *two friends*."

I was doing seven columns a week, a fan-magazine yarn a month, and a radio show—all from my home. For two years my bedroom took the worst beating any room ever had. Finally it was either pitch a tent in the back yard or find an office.

I suddenly became the great executive and took a suite of

five rooms on the seventh floor of an office building overlooking Hollywood and Vine, which I still occupy.

Then I hired a staff. Hy Gardner, who's now doing his own column for the New York *Herald Tribune*, came out from the big city to be my assistant and leg man. A writer friend of mine who was idle introduced me to his girl and persuaded me to take her on. After a month, I decided she should have remained idle too. I borrowed Gertrude Shanklin from the Metro scenario department, then hired a friend of my son Bill's, Fred Banker. He has developed into an expert writer, but at that time I put him to work taking care of a scrapbook I'd just started.

The quarters weren't luxurious, but they were ample. There was plenty of secondhand furniture, and a rug in my room that was worn down to the nub.

Although I had an office and a staff, I had no idea how to manage them. The excitement, tension, and bickering that went on there would have sent anyone else to a madhouse. The place was like Grand Central Station with three exits.

I'm the only columnist with an office on Hollywood Boulevard and a listed phone number. So our place became Miss Information. Actors walked in from the street for a handout but, after taking one look at the reception room, said to themselves, "She must need it more than I do," then turned right around and went out again. Mothers who thought their children were more talented than Shirley Temple brought their progeny in to sing and act for me. Dancers, male and female, insisted upon showing me their qualifications. Even the trainer of three elephants decided I was the only woman to keep him out of jail when the police tried to run him in for leaving his animals stranded on a street corner. I felt so sorry for the beasts, I did.

I saw all comers. Activity went into high gear when I went on the air three times a week for Sunkist Oranges. I saved all my spiciest bits of gossip for the air, and, knowing nothing about libel laws, insisted on putting them on the radio. The battle for news was nothing compared with the battles I had at the broadcasting studio.

The entire legal department of CBS would be on hand before each broadcast. After laughing over the items, they would cut my best bits to pieces. I saw no humor in taking the spice out of my masterpieces, so I started a little scheming of my own. I would read the innocuous little stories straight, get the lawyer's okay, then when I went on the air would get the insinuations over with my vocal intonations, a little trick I'd learned from Wolfie.

I was having a wonderful time until Ernie Martin, a CBS executive, pinned me to the mat. "How are you going to read this story, Hedda?" he would ask. "Straight?"

"How else?"

"Let me hear you do it."

I'd read it straight, then he'd trap me. Turning to his lawyer, Ernie would say, "I have a witness. You promised to do it just like that on the air."

Sometimes, with the help of Gordon Levoy, the most patient and one of the greatest lawyers I know, I'd rewrite an item ten times, then Ernie would say, "Sorry, I can't pass it." I fought, I pleaded, I cried. I went on the air exhausted.

I was so tough on Ernie, he gave up radio forever, went to New York, and became famous as the co-producer of *Where's Charley?* and *Guys and Dolls.*

My show wasn't heard in Los Angeles. The sponsor figured that everybody in California bought Sunkist oranges anyway, so why advertise? Dema had retired to her peaceful avocado ranch near Whittier, California, but wanted to check up on her protégée's progress. So, when I'd been on the air a few months, she came in to hear the show.

After sitting through a rehearsal and listening to the performance, she said, "How long has this been going on?"

"What do you mean?"

"How often do you battle like you did today?"

"Three times a week. Why?"

"I started you on this career," said Dema. "Another year of this and you'll be dead. I can't sit by and let you commit suicide. Somebody's got to do your fighting for you so you can do the work. If you like, I'll come in and run your radio show and your business."

That was the luckiest day of my life. We made our business arrangement verbally. There's never been the scratch of a pen between us.

Dema hadn't been in my office twenty minutes until a housecleaning job took place the like of which the Guaranty Building on Hollywood Boulevard never saw before or since.

She swept the place as though it had an infection. And sure enough it had. I knew how to hire, but I'll be darned if I could fire. I can't yet. I have no more business sense than a rabbit. I admit it.

But for Dema, I'd have no more money today than I had then. I was paying my staff more than I was earning. But I liked that word "staff." It seemed very important, even though I was headed straight for the poorhouse.

Things underwent a change in Hedda Hopper's Hollywood. Gertrude Shanklin and Freddie Banker remained; then when Freddie went to war we took on Spec McClure, who's been with me for ten years, with the exception of three and a half years during which he helped to fight the war.

The same Toms, Dicks, and Harrys got into my outer office, but, except when Dema wasn't there, they never reached me. She was saving my energy for work. She also was saving money for a rainy day. I was put on a weekly allowance of twenty-five dollars. It's never been raised. I save the checks until I have four before cashing them. I feel richer with one hundred dollars in my pocketbook.

The office was running as smooth as a Diesel engine until my intellectual associates started giving me lessons in grammar. Not that I didn't need them, but it was a little late.

My secretary, Gertrude Shanklin, was all business, meticulous, efficient, a college graduate. She cringed at my mistakes. I was merrily dictating my column one morning when Gert stopped and said, "You've got a split infinitive in this sentence."

Now I can split a cord of wood or a side of beef, but an infinitive! To this day I wouldn't know one if it flew up and hit me in the face. So I said, "Huh? What's that?"

With the patience of a saint, Gert tried to explain it. When she finished, I asked her to read the sentence again. She did. "I like it," said I. "Let 'er split!"

A month later she tried again. Very quietly she said, "Miss Hopper, you have a dangling participle in that sentence."

"Dangling what?" I screamed. That was too much. I buzzed for Spec. "Come in here right away," I yelled. "Now, Gertrude, tell him what you said."

She did. Spec started to give me a grammar lesson, thought better of it when I said, "Let it dangle," and left the room howling with laughter.

Dangling participle, indeed. How would a girl who never graduated from grammar school know about things like that?

That was Gertrude's last try. She was called back to MGM and was replaced by Treva Davidson, another college graduate, who came to me after teaching school in Oklahoma.

I was surrounded by "degrees," but never knew until I read my profile in *Time* magazine that Spec also was a

Phi Beta Kappa. I asked him why he hadn't told me; it would have made me feel important.

"You never asked," he replied.

I'm sometimes a little vague about names too. Dema makes out the checks and puts them on my desk for signing. After five years of this I looked up from the checks one day and said, "Why should I be paying David C. McClure? What the hell does he do?"

"He," said Dema, "is Spec, your Phi Beta Kappa assistant. Remember?"

When my contract with Esquire was up, Gardner (Mike) and John Cowles of the Des Moines *Register-Tribune* promised me a wire service and I signed a three-year deal with them. They couldn't deliver my column by wire, and I still had a year to go when they learned that Captain Joe Patterson, who built up the fabulous New York *Daily News*, had offered me a contract. Mike Cowles, who was always a friend and still is, said, "I couldn't deliver what I promised, and won't stand in your way. I know what it will mean to you and your career to be with the Chicago *Tribune*–New York *News* Syndicate."

With his blessing, I made my deal with Captain Joe. The contract was drawn up hurriedly on the day of the *News* cocktail party for thousands of editors, publishers, and writers, then in New York for the publishers' convention. I squeezed the signing in between the *Daily News* party, my radio show, and a party Jane and Larry Tibbett gave for me before I caught the night plane for home.

I can see Captain Joe now, sitting on a high table in a small office in the *News* Building with a grin on his face and his feet swinging free. I wondered at the time why he looked so impish, like the cat that had stolen the cream.

I found out the next day when I threw the contract on Dema's desk and, with a beatific grin on my puss, said, "My girl, look what I've done!"

She looked, she read, she roared, "Where's the money?"

Then I read and gasped.

Sure as God made little green apples, I had signed to deliver seven columns a week for five years for nothing. There wasn't a dollar sign in the whole contract. Then I knew why Captain Joe had smiled.

I thought Dema would blow a gasket. She made me promise never to sign anything, not even a letter, unless she looked at it. I've been pretty faithful after my fashion, too, except for a couple of backslides.

Dema had been turning down radio guest spots right and left for fifteen hundred dollars a throw, when I met a friend in the NBC parking lot. He was struggling with a local show and said, "If you'll be my guest, I'll give you a Mixmaster."

I had always wanted one of those gadgets and said, "Sure. When do you want me?"

When I told Dema about the great deal I'd made, I thought she'd throw me out of the seventh-story window. She could have done it, too. "For the money I've turned down for you," she thundered, "you could have bought a thousand Mixmasters."

Another time when I was in New York, I was asked to be photographed for a particular brand of beer for the Manhattan papers only. In return I got a goodly hunk of change and didn't think Dema ever would find out about it. But the week after I got home she stormed into my office. Somebody'd sent her half a dozen pictures of me holding a glass of beer in my hand.

Some of the biggest stars in Hollywood have worked their wiles trying to pry Dema loose from me. Her answer always is, "After running a three-ring circus, what would I do with a single act?"

26

When I first began to write—I mean dictate—I was the kindest chump that ever walked down the turnpike. I put all the juicy scandalous things I knew about my fellow workers in mothballs and said, "I'll write only the good."

Hollywood laughed smack in my face. My friends said to each other, "She won't last a week!" Most of them were glad. There were too many columnists in Hollywood already; the place was crawling with them. When my best friends jeered in my face I decided to let them have a few home truths. Then my telephone never stopped ringing. I heard from people I hadn't seen in years.

"Hedda," each would moan, "how could you say such and such a thing about me?"

"Well, it's true, isn't it?"

"Sure. But you're my friend."

"Put that in the past tense, my friend. I *was*. You never called to say thanks when I wrote that sweet story about

you last week. You laughed. You don't like the truth, huh? Well, sister, you're going to get it. You're going to see more facts in print than you've read in a long month of Sundays."

Eight weeks after the column started, Ida Koverman, then assistant to Mr. Big, Louis B. Mayer, gave a hen party for me, which meant she was putting her stamp of approval on my new activity. She invited every female in town—Norma Shearer, Jeanette MacDonald, Rosa Ponselle, Claudette Colbert, Joan Crawford, Sophie Tucker—they all came. With but one exception—Louella Parsons.

Then I wrote a little piece on the caste system in our town. How we jeered at Mother India, but put her to shame when it came to intermingling. What star in Hollywood, I asked, getting five thousand dollars a week, would sit at the same table with an actress getting a mere one hundred dollars? It was right good, I thought. So did the head of my syndicate.

But not the producers. It hit home and cut deep. One of the moguls even called up Norman Chandler, who laughed and said, "I thought it was great. Hope she does more like it."

Seems I was becoming a problem to Hollywood. I've remained one ever since. The most repeated sentence became, "You know, I like Hedda, but I just can't trust her to say the right thing. I don't know what she's going to write next." And you know something? Neither do I. One day the column is all sweetness and light, and the next day I put salt on its tail. And if the shoe fits, I let it pinch.

Norman Chandler received so many complaints about me, especially when I started writing my opinion of pictures, that one major producer threatened to cancel his advertising in the Los Angeles *Times*. At that Norman invited him to bring his pals, the heads of every studio in town, to the *Times* Building for luncheon.

That was a Saturday, and he well knew he was keeping them from the races at Santa Anita. But he fed them, then told them that I was entitled to my opinion. "Hedda has her own way of expressing it," said Norman. He liked it. He was sorry they didn't, but there was nothing he could do, and they'd just have to lump it.

And that was that!

My first big scoop was the Betsy and Jimmy Roosevelt divorce story on Sunday, October 22, 1939. That was really a wow. Up to that time only Jimmy's sister Anna had gone through the ordeal. Since then divorces in that family

have become a dime a dozen. There have been so many I'll bet they themselves have lost count.

I'd first met Jimmy when he brought his wife Betsy to Los Angeles. Their first baby was seven weeks old, and F.D.R. was still the governor of New York. Jimmy was selling insurance in Boston and was sent to Los Angeles to learn how the West felt about his father running for the presidency. I had the dubious honor of introducing Jimmy to Louis B. Mayer in his office at MGM.

I recall Louis's words: "I admire your father; I'll back him in any undertaking—except the presidency."

My next meeting with Jimmy came after his operation at the Mayo Clinic, where he met his present wife (then his nurse), Romelle Schneider. By that time FDR was entrenched in the White House.

After the operation Jimmy arrived in Hollywood with his wife Betsy and his nurse. Knowing he wouldn't be welcome in Washington, he decided to be a big shot in Hollywood. There wasn't a producer in town who wouldn't have grabbed him; Sam Goldwyn got there first.

Sam thought Jimmy was a bargain. Later he learned his mistake. To the Goldwyn Studio, Jimmy brought his friends, among them a girl who had been his social secretary (he told Sam). Jimmy wanted her put on the studio payroll, and since the salary named was less than that paid to any Goldwyn secretary, Sam agreed. But he was amazed when he discovered she didn't have the qualifications of a secretary. The girl was Romelle Schneider's sister.

It was as plain as the nose on his face that Jimmy was ready for a change and it was curtains for Betsy. I faced him with this. "It's true," he said, "but I'm not ready to break the story yet. When I do, you'll get it."

He promised, and that's one promise he kept.

On a Saturday night I got wind of it and phoned my assistant Hy Gardner to meet me at Jimmy's Beverly Hills home. I got there in nothing flat and rang the bell. Finally a butler appeared. "Mr. Roosevelt is not at home——" I stuck my foot in the door and yelled, "Jimmy, it's Hedda!"

"Madame, you can't——"

A disheveled head popped through a door, and Jimmy came out in bare feet and bathrobe. Pushing his butler aside, he let me in.

"My spies from New York tipped me off," I said. "Now give."

He did. This was 11 P.M., and I was twelve miles from the Los Angeles *Times*.

I stopped at the first drugstore, called the night editor, and yelled, "Hold the press!" They always do it that way in movies.

"What for?" he asked calmly.

"Gotta story. You'll like it."

"What is it?"

"Too big to tell you about on the phone."

He warmed a trifle. "Give us a hint."

"Just hold the presses," I yelled. As I banged down the receiver I heard him laugh.

When I got there the Sunday edition was ready to be put to bed. The city staff sat around, feet on their desks. "Okay, Hopper," one said, "let's have your big scoop. Did Shirley Temple have her curls cut off again?"

"How'd you like Jimmy Roosevelt's divorce?" I asked.

"You mean you got it?" Surreptitiously someone turned the doorkey on the Associated Press man and locked him in his glassed-in corner office.

"Here it is." I spilled what Jimmy had told me. Photographs flew out of the morgue; a typewriter rattled; a cynic said, "How do we know it's true?"

I wanted to bash his head in. "Call this number," I said. "Ask for Mr. Roosevelt." He did. I took the telephone. "Jimmy, here's an unbeliever. Tell him."

"I've given Miss Hopper the story," Jimmy said while the guy listened sheepishly. "You can print what she tells you. I have complete confidence in her discretion. Good night."

The A.P. man sensed something and begged to be let out of his room.

They showed me the pictures. "We'll use this on page one," they said, pointing to a picture of Jimmy between Betsy and the nurse, Romelle Schneider, taken when they had landed in Los Angeles.

"No, you don't!" I said. "I promised Jimmy that the nurse wouldn't be mentioned."

They pleaded; I won.

A man went downstairs to see if the *Examiner's* nightly spy was on duty. He'd found this Saturday night dull and had gone home.

The front page was remade; the presses rolled.

Hy and I waited around until we got the first edition. There, with my by-line, was my scoop, about the son of the President of the United States. *My* by-line! And my column was only a year old.

I discovered something else that night. The applause wasn't

as great, except in my childish brain, but printer's ink smelled better than grease paint. I knew—I'd had my first bath in it.

On Monday, in Louella Parsons' column—first edition only—was a scathing bit about Jimmy Roosevelt, his nurse, her sister, brother, and mother. That scoop of mine got under Louella's skin, and ever after that, when I'd defend or take a crack at a star, she'd rush into print with a yarn giving the opposite point of view. It's been a game of cat and mouse ever since.

For years Louella queened it. You weren't engaged unless you told her first. Marriage without her knowledge? Are you kidding! Your child couldn't be properly born unless LOP had the scoop nine months in advance. And a christening without her presence? Ye gods! The studios had played it Louella's way for so long that it was difficult to shake themselves of the habit.

However, my friends—I had a few; still do—started to slip me stories first.

When Clark Gable married Carole Lombard, the King cut the First Lady down to size. Louella and I had both been intimate friends of the couple. The first time I ever saw Carole, I was dining with the Harry Lombards (he was a Boston banker who had retired to Beverly Hills). Jane Peters burst in to tell us she'd obtained a leading role opposite Edmund Lowe at one hundred dollars a week.

When Harry, who loved show people, asked what she was going to do about her name, she said, "Why can't I take yours—Jane Lombard?" Everybody got into the act. I don't recall who hit on the Carole, but I do know that Jane Peters entered the room and went out Carole Lombard.

Anyway, her marriage to Clark was a big story and put the couple on a spot, because LOP took it for granted she would get the exclusive.

Carole and Clark waited until most of the columnists had gone on a junket to San Francisco, then had the knot tied. Louella was on the train coming home when she got the news.

"It can't be true!" she gasped. "They would have told me first."

But she was wrong; it was true. And the story was given to all newspapers simultaneously—at Clark's request. He's a peace-loving guy and hates the constant bickering over who gets first whack at a yarn.

Peace didn't make him a star, though. He was a fighting guy. I first saw Gable in 1928 in a stage play, *Machinal.*

The audience scarcely could see his face but had a good view of his brawny back and liked what they saw. The play soon folded, then Clark landed in our town to take any job—even extra work.

He never would have passed for a collar ad—his ears were big and stuck out like the Yellow Kid's—but he was busting with virility when I worked with him in *The Common Law*. Clark played a rugged brute who growled out his lines in a way to shake your confidence in human kindness.

Connie Bennett and Bob Montgomery co-starred in the picture. Gable was cast as the husband of Connie's poor sister, a luscious blonde, Anita Page, whom Harry Thaw had found somewhere and brought to Hollywood. In the film, Clark drove a laundry truck and hated his wife's high-toned relative. He finally gave Connie her comeuppance. Having lost her money, she came back to her home town and threw herself on the mercy of the sister whom earlier she had mistreated. Too scared to knock on the door, Clark caught her standing outside their bungalow window peering at the lighted Christmas tree. The sister coaxed Gable to let Connie in; then, having done so, he turned on her and read her the riot act. That violent, venomous scene started him to stardom.

Clark looked every inch the truck driver. His ears hadn't been permanently fixed then. The make-up man contrived, with a bit of putty behind them, to stick them closer to his head. At times an ear would flap loose during a scene. He never smiled much until his bad teeth were taken care of.

If anyone had told us then that one day he'd be called King, we'd have laughed our heads off, and Clark would have joined us.

Director George Hill wanted Gable for the lead in *The Secret Six*, written by Frances Marion. But the studio had football hero Johnny Mack Brown under contract, and the head man said, "*Secret Six* goes to Brown. He's perfect." George Hill complied, but asked permission to cast Gable as a reporter. A small part. "Sure," said the brass, "plenty of newspaper reporters look funny. He might do all right."

Hill and Frances went into a huddle and rewrote the script to build up Gable's part.

The front-office fellows didn't see the rushes. When the picture was cut and ready to preview, they learned what these conniving star-makers had done. Gable stole the picture. Johnny Mack Brown, who got star billing, came out a supporting player. Clark was so good that the big boss

rving Thalberg, instead of firing Hill and Marion, gave hem a bonus.

As a result of the picture, Norma Shearer selected Clark as her leading man in *A Free Soul*. She played a lady, he a gangster. Their love scenes were like hot fat on an iron griddle. Norma wore a form-fitting dress of white satin without a stitch underneath. I can see it yet. It out-Harlowed anything Jean ever put on her back, including the one in *Hell's Angels* which was cut to her coccyx.

The critics thought Lionel Barrymore stole *A Free Soul*, but credit for the best review of the proceedings goes to a child. A friend of mine sent her little girl to a Saturday matinee to see a Walt Disney picture. The child came home and said, "Mummie, Norma Shearer must be sick."

"Norma Shearer? I thought you saw a Disney picture."

"Oh no. Norma Shearer and Clark Gable. And she must have been awfully sick—she was lying down most all the time."

When Gable was about to enlist as a private in the United States Air Force, I got the news beat on his plan and gleefully phoned it to the Los Angeles *Times* and New York *Daily News*. After the story ran in two editions, both papers jerked it when the powers that be at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer gave a denial to the Associated Press.

Four days later Gable himself made an honest woman of me by doing exactly what I had said he would do. The studio was a long time squaring themselves with the A.P., and even longer getting back into my good graces.

I knew the story was true because I had gotten it from the horse's mouth. The tip came from Clark's dentist, who was making the star an extra set of teeth. They had to be finished on a certain date, he was told, because Gable was leaving to join the Air Force.

After the story was confirmed, Daily *Variety* came to my defense:

> Hedda Hopper's exclusive yarn appeared in early editions of the Los Angeles *Times* and New York *News*. Both dailies yanked story after Metro put up a squawk that it was not so. Hedda took bows a couple of days later. Metro got its fuzz up, apparently, over the Hopper exclusive on the ground that her grabbing it first off would take the edge off news value for other syndicates. Columnist is now doing a sizzling burn because the studio unwarrantedly attempted to hold her up before her various editors in a highly critical light as a news-

hawk who rushes into print with unverified facts. Hedda had a feedbox tip on Gable and grabbed her on-the-level beat from under all opposition noses.

27

I've been asked at times if a columnist ever made a star. My answer is no. No single person can make a star. Of course you can help. But stardom is compounded of many elements. There must be a personality, or intelligence, or provocative talent.

You can snatch a girl from a ribbon counter, hire a press agent, dress her, teach her to walk and talk, give her a party, yes, put her name in lights maybe once or twice. But it's something else that keeps her name there.

Irving Thalberg was given credit for Norma Shearer's career. That is partly true. He did give her the opportunity by surrounding her with the greatest talent money could buy, picking plum stories that fit her qualities, and creating the setting. But it was Norma's dogged determination and her ability to take direction—plus public approval—that made and kept her a star.

Behind every name in lights you'll find a hundred helping hands. It may be a dramatic coach, a friend with a bank roll, a casting director, a talent scout; it may be any number of people. But one person alone cannot take credit for another's career.

In Joel McCrea's case four top stars did the trick. I became acquainted with Joel at the Santa Monica Beach Club at the time my son Bill went there. Once I asked if he'd like to escort me to a costume ball given by Marion Davies. Joel had never attended a costume affair and showed up at my house in a white silk shirt and white flannels. His "costume" was a scarlet sash round his middle. He and I both hoped he'd pass for a Spanish dancer. It never occured to either of us that he'd strike pay dirt.

At the party the stars flocked around, giving me the eye for an introduction to the guy. "Who's the handsome character?" they tossed at me. "Where'd you find him?"

"Oh, he's a friend of my son's."

"Yeah? Your boy must be—let's see—about eleven, isn't he?"

"Thirteen. He's been swimming with this young Adonis."

"Come on—what's the real story?"

"Well, Joel's a native son. He's been in pictures once or twice. He rides and swims beautifully. I wouldn't know about his dancing."

Four girls yelled in unison, "We'll take a chance on his dancing, honey."

One star piped up with, "I bet I get him first." That's Hollywood—the challenge to beat the next one or bust your buttons trying.

They all tried to unfold to Mr. McCrea the subtleties and shadings of romance. I must say they worked hard at it, but he wasn't having any. When all the usual blandishments failed, they vied to get him in their pictures. They deviled the producers, who went into their usual ravings. "Who is this McCrea, anyhow? Never heard of him."

This was duck soup for our lad, who wanted more than anything to be a movie star.

Constance Bennett was the first to get him on the screen as her leading man. I was in the picture, and what fun it was watching the shenanigans when it came time for Joel to make screen love. The minute shooting was over for the day, Connie was hanging on the ropes; and McCrea vanished so fast you'd think he was the shadow, not the substance.

By the time he had played leading man to all four stars, he was one himself. He smacked tradition once more for luck and proceeded to go out and get himself a bride of his own choosing, Frances Dee. Several of those Joel had courted on the screen cried, "Foul!" But the McCreas never heard it.

Their love didn't follow the Hollywood pattern. They own a self-supporting ranch and are bringing up two wonderful boys in a small community near their farm. They're civic-minded, attend P.T.A. meetings, and assist in the betterment of their town.

While Frances and Joel were part of Hollywood for years, none of the veneer or sophistication rubbed off on them. I wish our town harbored more such couples. But if it did, gossip writers would be writing fiction, not fact.

Although columnists can't actually make stars, a few words of encouragement in a newspaper often help a fading career. A mere mention in a column will inflate a falling ego faster than hot air will fill a flat tire. One of the most rewarding jobs of a columnist is being able to give a push in the right direction when it's needed.

Giving a helping hand to Lew Ayres wasn't difficult. Hav-

ing played his mother in a picture long before I wrote a line, I knew what kind of man he was.

Months before he made headlines as a conscientious objector in World War II, he warned his studio how he felt about war and, for their protection, asked not to be cast in any more Dr. Kildare pictures. That series with Lew and Lionel Barrymore was as popular as any Metro ever turned out. His bosses laughed and said, "You'll change your tune when the time comes. You'll join the Army," then went ahead and put him in more pictures.

Lew had taken first-aid instruction from the Red Cross and was teaching classes three nights a week when he was called to the colors. Declaring he was willing to serve his country in any way except by carrying a gun into battle, he was sent to a Conscientious Objectors' camp in Oregon.

Then Hollywood did a stupid thing. Rearing back on its sanctimonious haunches, it apologized for Lew. A studio spokesman stated they hadn't known about his convictions or they wouldn't have put him in the last two Kildare pictures. Everything possible was done to blacken his character. Theater chains refused to play his pictures; editorial writers blasted him.

This was too much. I was under the impression we were fighting to preserve the right of free speech and thought in our country.

Twelve years before we had acclaimed Lew for his sensitive performance in *All Quiet on the Western Front;* now Hollywood stood ready to crucify him for believing what the picture taught.

I wrote a long piece defending Lew Ayres' right to commit professional suicide for his convictions. The Los Angeles *Times* cut the story and Daily *Variety* gloated:

> Hedda Hopper's column took a trimming when her favorable remarks on Lew Ayres and his widely publicized action failed to get past the copy desk.

However I voiced my opinion on the air, pointing out that Lew could easily have got himself a cushy spot in the Army, as many Hollywood notables had done. I declared that Lew had more guts than those who cried loudest against him as they leaned back in their safe swivel chairs to adjust the creases in their brand-new made-to-order uniforms.

Ayres fought the war with a prayer book and a first-aid kit. I have letters from soldiers in the South Pacific testifying to his courage under fire. He came home a hero.

After his release he did something typically Ayres. With requests for his story from *Life, Saturday Evening Post, Cosmopolitan,* and practically every leading publication, he turned them all down, saying, "I'm not ready to talk yet, but when I am my first interview will be given to Hedda Hopper—if she wants it."

Joan Crawford wasn't as thoughtful as Lew. For two years after losing her MGM contract Joan had tough sledding. My sympathy went out to her. I knew what being out of a job meant, especially to an ambitious girl like Joan.

During those two years I put on a one-woman campaign for her. Always Joan would write a sweet note of thanks when I gave her a boost in the column.

When she turned out what I thought was her best performance in *Mildred Pierce,* I was the first to write that she should be rewarded with an Oscar. I knew about Joan's early life—her ambitions, loves, disappointments. Many lesser actresses, who hadn't given half her service, had received Academy Awards. I don't say my plugging got her the Oscar, but it certainly didn't hurt.

The first news she made after winning it was her divorce from Phil Terry. Louella had the story exclusively.

Later I heard that Joan had said, "After all, Hedda's my friend. She'll understand." I didn't. We've since made up, but I never will understand why friendship isn't a two-way street.

It wasn't friendship that put me on the band wagon for James Baskette; it was his talent. I thought his performance as Uncle Remus in Walt Disney's picture *Song of the South* was great. Since he was not nominated for a regular acting award, I believed he deserved a special Oscar.

Jean Hersholt, who never failed to lend a sympathetic ear to my suggestions, gave this one his quick support. As president of the Academy, he took the matter before the board. Several members were appalled at the suggestion that an Oscar be given to a man who played a slave. The feeling was that Negroes should play only doctors, lawyers, and scientists; and the picture had been picketed by several Commie groups for that reason.

Jean Hersholt won. It was Ingrid Bergman who presented Baskette with the Oscar, which he carried in a black velvet bag his wife had made for it.

Soon after he won it James became ill. The Oscar stood on a mantel across from his bed, with a tiny spotlight playing on it. James told a friend, "I'm the only black man in the world that ever got an Academy Award. It's something

no one can take away from me, and something no money can buy."

Baskette's death robbed him of the prize role in any man's life. He was slated to play "De Lawd" in the revival of *Green Pastures* on Broadway. After he passed on, another actor was chosen, but the play failed.

"De Lawd" took a special type of actor. Unless his own spirituality matched the role, the play was doomed to fail. The original *Green Pastures*, with Richard B. Harrison, who created the leading role, was one of the all-time greats on the Great White Way. Harrison was so beloved and so identified with the part he played that as he lay dying in a New York hospital his fellow players came to kneel and pray outside his room. My son Bill, undergoing an operation in an adjoining room, told me it was one of the most touching scenes he'd ever witnessed.

Sometimes, in my eagerness to help, I go too far. Joan Blondell needed a job when I happened to see her standing beside Benny Thau, a top MGM executive, at a cocktail bar one evening. I didn't hesitate to put the bite on Thau. "Why don't you give that sassy part in Clark Gable's picture *Adventure* to Joan?" I asked. "She's perfect for it."

He'd think about it, said Benny.

The following morning he called. "You sure put me on the spot last night. But I thought you'd be glad to know you got results. I've given Joan the part. If you hadn't mentioned it before her, I never would have thought of her."

Joan, though no introvert, hides her kindness under a bushel basket. When she came to Hollywood recently, after a stopover in Las Vegas, she came by my house. Naturally we got on the subject of gambling.

Joan said she'd never cared much about betting. Years ago while she was in Las Vegas with some friends who were losing their shirts she wandered from table to table, just to watch. An employee at a crap table said, "Come on, try a couple of throws. Risk ten bucks. It won't hurt you."

"I couldn't let the guy's challenge drop," Joan told me, "so I put down twenty dollars, got chips and the dice. He explained the game, and I started winning. I ran my twenty dollars up to seven hundred and fifty dollars.

"Then this guy who'd challenged me to try my luck said, 'Don't you think that's enough?'

" 'I guess so. What do I do now?'

" 'Go over to that window and cash in your chips.' I started to leave when I heard him mutter sort of under his breath, 'That was for the baby.'

" 'What baby?' I wondered. 'What did you say?' He gave me a blank look.

"Three weeks later I got the answer. Years before there'd been a girl at the studio whom I knew slightly. She was in trouble—unmarried and pregnant. Her friends came to me and asked me to chip in for an operation.

"You know I love children. I said, 'Tell the girl to come and see me.' Guess they thought I'd pay for the whole thing.

" 'You haven't the right to take a life,' I told her. 'That's God's business, not yours.'

" 'But the disgrace would kill my mother,' wept the girl.

" 'Do you want to have the baby?' I asked her.

" 'Yes—if I could have it without my mother finding out.'

" 'All right, then, instead of helping you finance an operation, I'll finance your baby for you.' "

Joan sent the girl away. After the baby came, the girl met a man in Las Vegas who fell in love with her. They were married. The girl's mother never knew the story, but the husband did. His wife told him.

"And?" I asked.

"It was seven hundred and fifty dollars that financed that baby," said Joan. "The amount I won at the dice table. The man who challenged me to try my luck was the girl's husband."

28

Yes, the power of the Hollywood press has been grossly exaggerated. Just as no columnist, single handed, makes a star, neither can he destroy one.

After frightening the wits out of America with his "Man from Mars" broadcast, Orson Wells came to Hollywood in 1937. I don't recall why Louella disliked him, but from the time he arrived she got out her scalpel and did a neat job on him.

My friendship with Orson goes back to the time my son Bill was doing a walk-on in *Romeo and Juliet* with Katharine Cornell, Basil Rathbone, and Orson in New York. Wells went out of his way to be nice to Bill. I didn't have a column; I was a struggling actress and appreciated a stranger taking time out to help my rough recruit of a son.

Bill introduced us one night at supper at the Algonquin Hotel.

"This six-foot-four monster is *your* son?" exclaimed Orson. "I had no idea." I liked him. We argue; we've even had some rough skirmishes. But I can't resist him.

Orson is loaded with talent. When he came to Hollywood he made quite a display of his versatility. The flashier he became, the more I praised him. Even his brashness had charm. With each new exploit, Louella grew angrier.

His first picture effort was *Citizen Kane,* which he produced, directed, and starred in. When it was whispered that the story was based on William Randolph Hearst's life, Louella confronted him with it. He laughed her off. "I couldn't do the life of Mr. Hearst," said the sly fox, "I don't even know him."

Louella shifted her tack and began praising him also. They became almost friendly.

I was on his set many times during the making of the picture. Anyone with half an eye could see that the story bore a striking resemblance to Mr. Hearst's life. Welles finally conceded it. "Okay, Hopper," he said, "I'll let you see it first. Then you can tell me what you think."

Only six people sat in a private projection room when the finished product was first unveiled. I was appalled. The film was too well done. An impudent, murderous trick, even for the boy genius, to perpetrate on a newspaper giant.

I didn't sleep very well following the show. Early next morning Orson was on the telephone demanding, "Well, what do you think?"

"You won't get away with it," I assured him.

"Oh, yes I will. You'll see."

Cockiness I can take; arrogance I abhor. Deciding that Mr. Hearst should know what was afoot, I passed on the information through channels.

Then it was that across the cerulean Hollywood sky the clouds obscured the sun, yes, and the moon too. Mr. Hearst called Louella, and when she gathered that I had seen the picture and that it did, in fact, have much to do with her boss's life, her sky fell right down around her ears.

Louella had a showing set up immediately for her and Mr. Hearst's lawyer. After the screening she begged the lawyer to talk to W.R. He declined. This was her baby. She was stuck with it.

That's how it happened. I'd put her on a spot. Not for revenge, but because of Orson's arrogance, and because Wil-

liam Randolph Hearst had always been unfailingly kind to me.

When he heard that I was starting a column, W.R. wrote:

MY DEAR HEDDA:

I am glad you are going to do some work for the Esquire Syndicate. The Esquire people are very clever. They produce a fine publication and they know good stuff.

I always thought that the stuff you did for the Washington paper was extremely good.

It was accurate, interesting, and high grade. It appealed to intelligent people who like the movies—and there are lots of them. So many moving-picture commentators write down to the level of the movies, as they call it.

I always figure, however, that these commentators write down because they can not write up.

Keep to your good high-class manner is my advice.

Best Wishes. I will look for your column.

Sincerely,
SIGNED: W.R.

If Mr. Hearst had taken his lawyer's advice to ignore *Citizen Kane,* the picture might have died quietly. Instead it had months of build-up after word spread that W.R. had put thumbs down on it and threatened to sue any theaters which ran it. That tactic was duck soup to every enemy Mr. Hearst ever had. Every time the picture was mentioned it helped to build up Orson. The film was praised out of all proportion to its merit.

With presidents of picture companies, vice-presidents, lawyers, network heads, and theater men flying through the air, you'd have thought Orson had attacked America with a homemade atomic bomb.

In the days that followed, Louella kept busy phoning her friends—Sam Goldwyn, Louis B. Mayer, and others—in an effort to prevent my putting the life of Orson Wells on my air show. She didn't succeed. I did him up in six parts.

Even the New York *Daily Worker* got into the act. Never having had any love for me, they reported this feud with

gusto. I got the better of the argument—my first and only good notice in that publication, I'm happy to say.

Orson went on his obstinate way, made some good films, some bad ones, and started many trends. I had him in the office one day for an interview. "Nothing makes me so furious about you, Orson," I said, "as the way you scatter your talents. Why do you do it? If you'd concentrate your powers in one field, there's nothing you couldn't accomplish."

"Hedda," he replied, "I'm not interested in anything but experimentation. There's something inside me that makes me itch to ferret out things." He laughed. "You, of all people, should understand that!

"Don't get me wrong. There's nothing the matter with my ego. I like praise. But I don't give a damn about turning out an Academy Award picture just for the sake of winning an Oscar. It doesn't matter whether I'm popular here or not. I'm interested in opening up new fields—or leaving the old ones better than they were when I found them. I don't think this attitude particularly commendable. Nature just cut me out for an experimentalist, that's all. I can't be a competent hack. If I try, I make a lousy job of it."

The combined efforts of Louella and the entire Hearst press couldn't kill Orson. He wasn't even thrown out of the picture business, and is still making films abroad. However, he has remained at the top of Miss Parsons' black list—and I'm just one kick behind him.

A certain amount of feuding, like competition, is healthy. Keeps you on your toes. Once in a while, though, someone hits below the belt and throws you off balance. That happened to Gene Tierney, who looks more like a freshly laundered debutante than a film star.

The Gary Coopers brought together the crème de la crème of the picture colony at a party in their home. Gene Tierney made a beeline for me. "I've been trying to get you all afternoon to tell you the wonderful news," she said. "I'm going to have another baby."

"Congratulations and thank you, darling," I replied, then hustled to the telephone.

Henry Hathaway, one of our ace directors, was a patient at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. Many of his pals at the party decided to call and cheer him up. There were half a dozen at the telephone ahead of me. After saying hello to Henry along with the rest, I finally got through to the *Times* night desk to give them Gene's news.

"Put her on to verify it," they said.

I looked for her, but she was nowhere to be found. Sud-

denly Louella barged over to me and hung on like a limpet. That in itself should have tipped me off that something was in the wind—not Chanel No. 5 either.

Next morning I heard the story from the wife of a producer who wasn't even there. Seems Louella had been given the story that afternoon exclusive from Gene's studio. When she heard the star had told me, she flounced over to Gene and asked if she had given me the story. And there followed a real verbal hoedown. Several gentlemen overheard the whole thing, but none came to Gene's defense. When it was over, they did have the courtesy to take the weeping star to her car.

Ordinarily an actor is hardened to tongue-lashings from columnists; most can take them in stride. But Gene was very sensitive on the subject of motherhood. When she came to the party she wanted everyone to know she was going to have another baby because she herself was so delighted at the prospect.

Louella and I both knew about her first child, a beautiful little girl who was born with a sleeping mentality. Gene and her husband, dress designer Oleg Cassini, tried many doctors, but no cure could be found for a mind that never developed. Determined to learn the cause of the affliction, Gene found it in an Australian doctor's treatise, written only a month before her baby's birth.

She had contracted German measles in the first month of pregnancy. That Australian doctor wrote that in ninety per cent of the cases in which a mother has German measles before the fifth month of pregnancy, the child has an arrested mentality. Most doctors advise mothers to have an operation in such instances.

For years Gene cared for the child at home with a special nurse in attendance. Now the little girl is in a private sanitarium.

You can imagine how happy Gene was when she knew she would have a second child. When she came to the party she was sure everyone would rejoice with her, but discovered that some persons are more concerned over a headline.

One of the gentlemen who helped Gene to her car that night was Rex Harrison. He waited until he was six thousand miles away in the security of his English home, then wrote his version of the incident for a British magazine. Rex went to great lengths to take all Hollywood columnists apart, and used that story as Exhibit A. He didn't help himself any in my book by neglecting to mention that he and the rest of the prominent males who listened to LOP never

raised their voices in protest. I always wondered why, if he was such a fine, honorable man, he hadn't come to Gene's defense at the time.

My feeling for Rex Harrison had an aftermath—not in my favor. Leland Hayward gave me the opportunity to invest in his play *Mr. Roberts,* the best investment I ever made. Then he asked if I'd like to go in on *Anne of a Thousand Days,* starring Mr. Harrison.

No, I did not.

"Why?" asked Leland. "Don't you think it will go?"

"Yes, your star's a fine actor, but count me out. I have my reasons."

And because of my stand, I wasn't given a chance to invest in Leland's next play, *South Pacific,* a gold mine for everyone who did.

No, Rex Harrison is not one of my favorite people!

In the beginning I'm pretty sure Louella liked me. She might yet if my column hadn't caught on. But the story that we were fussin' and feudin' made good copy. It grew and blossomed, nourished by studio publicity heads who used us, one against the other.

No one can deny that Louella is a fine reporter. One of her biggest scoops was that Ingrid Bergman was going to have a baby by Roberto Rossellini while she was still the wife of Dr. Peter Lindstrom.

This news, coming at Christmas time, was tough to take. Even casehardened newspaper publishers refused to believe it at first. Having seen Ingrid on the screen in *Joan of Arc,* they'd come to imagine that some of that sainthood had rubbed off on her. She just couldn't commit such a common sin!

I spent the day of the announcement rubbing egg off my face, because six months before I'd interviewed Bergman at the scene of the crime. I went to see her in Rome the day the Italian newspapers reported that she was pregnant. I must confess I've never seen her give a finer performance.

She wore a simple cotton dress, no stockings, open-toed sandals. As she paced up and down in her apartment on a back street of the Italian capital, she stopped in front of me and said, "Hedda, look at me. Do I look like I was going to have a baby?"

She'd never looked thinner, and I said so. Then Ingrid declared she would sue the Italian papers for daring to print such a falsehood.

I left her that day convinced that she was a martyr, a

glorious actress, and an honest woman. In fact, using her quotes, I wrote a story which appeared on the front pages of many metropolitan newspapers. I never suspected that Ingrid's press agent (employed by her and also by her studio boss Howard Hughes), who was with me during our interview, would subsequently tell the truth to LOP.

When Lilly Dache put on a fashion show for charity at the Beverly Hills Hotel, my feud with Louella came into full flower. I was late; the lights had dimmed for the show to start. Spotting a vacant seat at Margaret Ettinger's table, I hissed, "Can I sit here?"

"Sit," she said.

Next thing I knew, up rose Louella from across the table and stalked out of the room. I apologized to Maggie (Louella's cousin). "I'm terribly sorry. I'll move."

Maggie shrugged. "You will not. This is silly. I'll get her back." Minutes later she returned with LOP. By that time the spectators—Loretta Young, Mary Pickford, Marion Davies, Claudette Colbert, and a hundred others—were paying more attention to us than to Lilly's hats. All eyes were peeled to see who'd get scratched first.

When the show ended, I made my exit before Parsons got out of her chair. I called Maggie to say again how sorry I was to spoil her party.

"It wasn't my table," she said; "it was reserved for Lorena Danker."

Lorena's husband Danny, whom everybody loved, was handling Lilly Dache's account at the time. His company, the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency, had staged the show.

I phoned Lorena and told her I hadn't known it was her table.

"You might have investigated before you sat down," she snapped.

"I didn't want to spoil the show. Lilly happens to be a friend of mine," I explained.

Mrs. Danker, LOP's intimate friend, wouldn't have any peace with Hopper and never was friendly after that. Now that she's Mrs. Louis B. Mayer, she's still unfriendly.

So it was fun upsetting Lorena's marriage applecart. Naturally she'd given the exclusive story of her wedding plans to Louella. But the place of the nuptials was top secret.

One of Lorena's greatest friends tipped me off to the location. I told the Los Angeles *Times,* and they got the beat

on the dizziest, silliest Keystone Comedy elopment of our motion-picture history.

Instead of being gracious, Mr. Mayer tried to outrun the reporters and photographers, which proved one thing. He's not as fast as his horses.

Editor and Publisher, the trade journal of the newspaper profession, called Mr. Mayer's attention sharply to certain incongruities of the event:

> For a guy who is in a business that lives on newspaper publicity, L. B. Mayer pulled a boner. Press reports stated that Mayer was "very much insulted" that reporters and photographers approached him for stories and pictures. His publicity chief told the press that Mayer will talk to no person less than a newspaper owner or news service head. Wow!

Louella and I have been offered a fistful of money to appear on radio and in pictures together. I always accept; she always declines.

Even when our mutual friend Charles Brackett wanted us to appear together in *Sunset Boulevard,* she refused. I appeared, and for months she didn't mention the picture or the name of its star in her column. She never did write about the film *Breakfast in Hollywood,* which starred the beloved Tom Breneman. I was in it.

When Collie Small wrote a piece about me for the *Saturday Evening Post,* the magazine asked for a picture of Louella and me together. Dockie Martin, LOP's husband, would approve only if he were allowed to okay the story!

However, Louella and I buried the hatchet—and not in each other. The burial took place after I devoted a whole column to *I Remember Mama,* produced by LOP's daughter, Harriet, and directed by George Stevens. It was a fine picture and I said so.

Harriet was in New York when it appeared in the *Daily News.* She phoned her mother and said, "You must call Hedda at once and thank her for me."

Louella did. Then added, "Let's make peace."

"Okay. Name the date and place."

"Let's do it publicly. Say Romanoff's tomorrow at one o'clock."

"You're on."

I was there early at the number-one table. When she came in and sat down, mouths flew open and stayed that way. Every table seemed to need a telephone to alert friends.

Around the bar was a mob six deep. In answer to telephone calls, more arrived every minute. Nobody moved. No one knew what to do. If a friend of Louella's passed the table, there was an embarrassing silence and a hasty retreat as they tried to figure out if they should speak to me—and vice versa.

That day Mike Romanoff's receipts soared. We lingered over our cracked crab two hours, and left arm in arm.

Peace—it's wonderful! But it didn't last.

I've always thought this description suited us best: Louella Parsons is a reporter trying to be a ham; Hedda Hopper is a ham trying to be a reporter!

29

All during my acting years I longed and waited for a call from Cecil B. DeMille. Everybody wanted to act for the producer, whose middle name should have been Barnum. Not until I'd been doing my column for several years did I get a nod from the master. Then for a part so small you could have stuck it in one eye. But, let's be fair, had it been longer I couldn't have done it.

I was cast to play a southern belle, Paulette Goddard's aunt in *Reap the Wild Wind*, and had to be laced into a pair of stays made for a female half my size. Each day DeMille made the rounds, pinching the ladies' waists to see if we had 'em on. Some men prefer bottoms; DeMille was concerned with waistlines only.

I had to faint for him. Don't know why I've never fainted. Guess I was too curious to go unconscious; never wanted to miss anything. Anyhow, I had to learn to faint—with grace, besides.

Laura Hope Crews gave me lessons; Ethel Barrymore told me how she fainted. I practiced fainting from left to right, backward, and on the bias. At last I was ready for my big moment. I fell backward; my hoop skirts held me in a graceful position; and DeMille roared, "Cut! That's it!"

I picked myself up from the floor. "What! I only get to do it once? For three weeks I've been passing out all over Hollywood."

"One faint, Hopper," said DeMille.

While we were making this picture Paulette and I decided to accept an invitation from Myron Selznick to week-end

with him at Arrowhead. He had a lovely mountain cabin there where he entertained clients, business associates, and friends. We loved Myron. An actors' agent and brother of producer David, he was a sweet, gentle man.

His mother once said to me at a cocktail party, "Hedda, why don't you love my son David like you did Myron?"

I opened my mouth to answer. David was standing beside me and didn't want to risk my reply. He knew I wouldn't hesitate to use the words "ruthless" and "heartless." Before I could speak, he said, "Mother, Hedda and I are both egomaniacs and couldn't possibly love each other."

Paulette was stuck that week-end with H. G. Wells, and on impulse said, "Let's take him along to Myron's cabin." Accordingly, the Charles Chaplin Rolls-Royce, complete with Japanese chauffeur, Paulette, and H.G., arrived at my house to pick me up, and off we started.

Paulette had phoned to prime me. "We'll stop at the Huntington Hotel in Pasadena to dine. I've arranged for Upton Sinclair to come by and pay his respects to Mr. Wells." I thought, What a charming idea; she's so thoughtful.

We dined. Sinclair joined us. Wells loathed him. As we finished coffee in came Johnny McClain, handsome newspaperman par excellence. I looked at Paulette. She winked. Then she left in McClain's car, leaving me to go mountaineering with Wells, who was notorious for his clutching hands and random lovemaking.

Sure enough, we had barely started upgrade when it started. We had a fur rug tucked round us. Gently I slid the rug off his knees, wrapped it around my own, tucked myself in tight and said, "Mr. Wells, you're a brilliant writer, but I'm not in the least interested in your exploring talents."

It made him so mad he proceeded to tell me in detail what a sublime lover he was. He named his mistresses and told me how many illegitimate children he had. Wells added that the children loved him more than their mothers. Each year they all came to his house to celebrate the Yuletide. I'll skip the lurid details.

When we arrived at the cabin, he was still furious. I'd commented, "What a simple, cozy home life you must lead in England. Too bad you couldn't have held on to the American colonies. They would have given you more room to spread out."

No host was in sight, no visible guests. We were assigned to our quarters, and I found myself sharing a room with Paulette, who arrived three hours later.

McClain, not having been expected, was quartered in a small

room upstairs. He and Paulette had battled coming up the mountain, so he kept to his room and read. There were delightful guests, however, and, Mr. Wells notwithstanding, I had fun.

In the course of the week end, Paulette, not realizing how much I loathed her guest, suggested that Wells write a guest column for me.

"I write only when I'm paid for it," he snorted. He was on a lecture tour, and when I asked how many lectures he had to memorize he said peevishly, "Memorize? I read my speeches."

"You mean Americans pay to hear you read?" I exclaimed.

"Certainly. They see the top of my bald head, hear my voice, and feel rewarded."

Yes, he was undoubtedly a great writer, but an egotistical Englishman who held his nose at everything American—except money.

When it was time to leave, I asked Paulette what she was giving the servants. She looked at me, shook her head sadly, and said, "You're a babe in the woods. Don't do a thing. Watch me."

Myron, our host, was coming round a corner. "Darling," said Paulette, "I forgot my pocketbook. Let me have some money for tips."

He drew out a roll of bills and she peeled off a twenty. As the butler came by, she handed it to him, saying, "This is for you to share—from Miss Hopper and me."

And I'll be darned if she didn't return to the city with McClain. Thank heavens Wells crouched in his corner and snored all the way home. Compared to his amorous revelations, it was music to my ears.

I'll lay you odds Paulette never wins an Academy Award for acting, but she'd have a dozen of those statues if they were given for business acumen—though she'd probably demand they be washed with gold before accepting them.

Paulette's a natural-born collector. When she was fourteen her mother told her it was bad luck to buy jewelry for herself, and she promised to mind her mother.

After she and Charlie Chaplin separated, a man south of the border fell for her, and she returned from Mexico laden with antiques, paintings, precious stones. She owns several treasures from a Mexican museum and a jade necklace that museum tourists used to ogle.

I never understood her marriage to Burgess Meredith, although he did teach her a lot about the theater. After they

wed, he turned over to her his farm in Dutchess County. During the war the government planted her acres in soybeans, which she then permitted the government to buy back —at a profit to her.

I went to interview Paulette after one of her European tours. "I can't give you dinner," she warned, "but we'll have a little snack."

The walls of her apartment were covered with famous paintings by Diego Rivera, Waldo Pierce, Renoir. There was no more room to hang them, so she had stood them on the floor against chairs. The latest one, a personal discovery, was done by a local taxi driver.

Paulette reclined in a black skintight princess dress, held up by her personality. Her ears were weighted with dollar-sized gold earrings crusted with diamonds. On her feet were strapped golden sandals.

The "snack" consisted of fresh shrimp, caviar, buttered pumpernickel, sandwiches, iced champagne in silver buckets, vodka, and a spicy sauce in a scooped-out red cabbage.

"Have any trouble getting your loot through customs?" I asked, fascinated.

"Oh no," she said, though her smile was acid. "You fixed everything with that little item in your column about what I was bringing in. The customs men were waiting for me and held me up for six hours while they went through every piece of luggage with an X ray."

"I was just trying to be complimentary," I said.

"Oh, you were!" She poured herself another glass of champagne, spread a blob of caviar on a cracker, adjusted a diamond earring, and said, "You know, Hedda, possessions don't mean a thing to me, really."

"Come now, this is Hopper you're talking to."

"No, seriously, they don't. There was a time when clothes, cars, jewels meant everything. That was before I had 'em. Now there's nothing left for me to desire. Things, I mean. For myself, I must be free.

"There was a time when I dreamed of being a great actress. Now I'd rather have a short role with long eyelashes than a long role with no eyelashes."

"Before you start giving away your loot, how about showing me your latest?"

She left the room and came back with a diamond tiara and a gold bag—solid gold.

"For a girl who doesn't want possessions," I said, "you certainly travel heavy."

"But, Hedda, that bag is only to carry my lipstick in. The

tiara? Not much, really, but beautiful workmanship, don't you think?"

Paulette was a natural for a role in *The Women*. The cast wouldn't have been complete without this goddess. I didn't see how Metro could leave me out of it either. "After all," I said to director George Cukor, "I'm a woman."

Cukor said, "We're jam-packed with stars, but I'll stick you in as the newspaper reporter in the last reel."

While the picture was in production, life on the sound stage was as rugged as the lines being spoken. Norma Shearer, Joan Crawford, Paulette, Roz Russell, Mary Boland, Lucille Watson, Joan Fontaine, and Marjorie Main all carried their little sharp razors.

Norma and Joan Crawford never were what you'd call bosom pals. During Norma's close-ups, Joan would sit out of camera range and knit.

When Paulette had her big scenes, she brought thick, juicy sandwiches for all the crew. They ate like kings when Paulette was in the spotlight.

Nobody paid much attention to Joan Fontaine, so when she came to her big scene she took direction, was natural, and didn't overact. Not until she was acclaimed for her performance in *Rebecca* did she start doing the latter, and since then she's never stopped hamming.

I always thought it a pity that we didn't have room for Mae West in that picture. She would have taught those gals the meaning of the word "sex." By kidding the popular commodity, Mae made a fortune.

For some reason, before I met her, I expected to see a rather dowdy if statuesque burlesque queen. Minus her trains and trappings, Mae doesn't look to be any taller than Janet Gaynor.

When she remarked to me—not with quite the same intonation she lets loose on her leading men—"Why don't you come up and see me sometime?" I went like a shot.

When I arrived, the soulful aroma of garlic and onions led me by the nose to her apartment. The door was opened by her maid and I was ushered into a white drawing room. White piano, white furniture, white flowers. The posies were artificial. Outside the apartment building, owned by Mae, beautiful flowers bloomed in the gardens. But indoors Mae had to have white blossoms, and those imitations cost her twelve hundred dollars.

"Why haven't you married again?" I wanted to know.

"Too busy," said she. "Success and money first. Husband comes later. I've been engaged a few times. Mother always

found fault. She was right. If I hadn't listened to her when she said I'd get tired of them, I'd have had to shell out a fortune to pay for divorces. There's no percentage in that, honey."

"Why do you think there are so many divorces in Hollywood?"

"Because all actors are selfish brutes. Now suppose I married an actor—believe me, dearie, I know several who wouldn't be too hard to get—professional jealousy would walk right in that door with us and make itself at home before we got our—hats off. We couldn't do a picture together. It's always one career that's ahead of the other. So one or the other would begin to get irritable.

"It's a full-time job, holding a man. Sex can be either important—or common as grass. I'm grateful to the public that they like my brand. It's been a battle to make 'em see it my way. I've served time on the stage—not to mention the time I served on Welfare Island, when Uncle Sam had *me* up to see *him*. Boy! I got more experience there than in all the rest of my life put together.

"Other women told their stories and I listened. I found out what put them behind bars. I decided from that time on, I'd amuse people by making my life an open book. You know you can't be entertaining in jail—there's no audience. The only one who pays is you."

I was on the set the day Mae and Alison Skipworth were ready to play a scene. Skippy was edgy. She knew beforehand, and right well, that Mae was going to steal it. When she could stand it no longer she turned to Mae haughtily and said, "I'll have you know I'm an actress!"

A slow smile slid across Mae's features. "It's all right, dearie," she said. "I'll keep your secret."

Before leaving her apartment the day of our interview, I asked how she knew so much about men.

At that, she rose—she was wearing a baby-blue skintight hostess gown—swayed across the room, straightened a picture of herself in a white frame on top of her white piano, and intoned, "Baby, I went to night school."

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Anyone as outspoken as I am is bound to make enemies. Having only friends would be dull anyway. Like eating eggs

without salt. They may be better for you, but where is the tickle to your palate?

Dale Carnegie can bleat about making friends and influencing people. He can have it! I love my enemies, their cracks at me, their rages, and the publicity it gives me. Then, too, it keeps their juices from stagnating.

I've had fun walking into a room and seeing guests scatter as though I were Typhoid Annie. "Good heavens, I didn't think she'd be invited," they buzz.

My only trouble is a tendency to forget I'm feuding with a star and go right up and speak to her. I've never known it to fail; the next day I get candy or flowers.

I had some words with Marlene Dietrich. What about, I can't for the life of me remember. When she quit Paramount and was making an independent picture, she invited me on her set to pose for some photographs with her.

I was an hour late. I kept trying to recall what we'd argued about, but couldn't remember.

Marlene had tripped on the set and, trying to save a baby from injury, had broken her ankle. I've known plenty of stars who would have let the baby go boom and saved themselves. I told her how I admired her for the risk she'd taken. We were photographed in an affectionate pose; and never got around to what it was we had fought over. I suppose she'd forgotten too.

As far as I'm concerned, Dietrich can do no wrong. She proved herself more than a glamour girl in World War II. When Hitler was on the march, Dietrich was whispered about in certain circles as the new Mata Hari. She never pretended she was born anywhere but Germany; but that didn't make her a spy. She hated Hitler and all he stood for.

While she was being talked about, she wasn't showing off her fine clothes and jewels in army camps. She was in the Hollywood Canteen kitchen, washing dishes. She never came out to take bows. She wanted no photographers poking their cameras into her sink.

One star, escorted by three press agents and her husband, came into the kitchen one evening to be photographed washing dishes. "May I borrow your apron, darling?" she cooed to Marlene as she undid it. Then, pushing Dietrich aside, she took off her long white gloves and plunged her hands into the sink so the photographer could get his shot.

Marlene stood, hands on hips, and watched; then, as flash bulbs popped, she drew back her hand and let the star have it right in the face. Without a word, Marlene put her apron back on and went ahead with the dishes.

Without any mood music she went overseas to entertain our troops, but not to Mr. Hitler's Germany to star in pictures. It wasn't for their lack of trying. As far back as 1936 the Nazis were wooing her. Hitler offered to pay her in English pounds.

She told me that during Christmas of that year she was living at Claridge's Hotel in London. A man brought her a Christmas tree from Herr Hitler himself, and a few days later Von Ribbentrop called and invited her to dinner.

"I don't go out with men I don't know," Marlene said to Herr Von Ribbentrop.

"Surely you know me!" he exclaimed.

"Only by reputation," she said.

Marlene booked passage on a German boat to Hamburg to see her sick mother. En route she received a warning that going to Germany would be unwise. She feigned illness and had herself put off the boat at Cherbourg. Then she became frightened that the Nazis might take reprisals against her mother.

Shortly after the war, when her mother died, our G.I.'s built a coffin and lent Marlene a truck to take her mother to the cemetery—when she'd been dead twelve days.

Our War Department gave her a Medal of Freedom Ribbon, and seven years later the French presented her with the Order of Chevalier of the Legion of Honor.

I asked her what the German citizens thought when she returned home with the conquering Allied soldiers. She laughed and said, "The Army thought I'd be killed, and assigned me two bodyguards. I had no need of them. I was the local girl who'd made good!"

Another reason for the soft spot in my heart for Marlene is that she was my mother's favorite singer. The last time Mother visited me she wore out two records of that famous song "See What the Boys in the Back Room Will Have." I was certain she didn't know what the song was offering the boys, and once asked her why she was so fond of it. She replied, "I just love her voice."

Mother was hard of hearing. Trying to be helpful, I bought her a hearing aid, had it adjusted, and had her dresses made so the device would be hidden. Noticing she wasn't using it, I asked her why. She replied, "I don't like the harsh sounds of the world. I can hear you perfectly. If there's anything important I should know, you'll tell me."

"But what about pictures, Mother? You can't hear them."

"No, but I enjoy looking at them. It was many years be-

fore they talked. There was something soothing about the quiet pictures."

Not wanting to hurt my feelings or waste my money, she occasionally wore the hearing aid; but when she got home to Altoona she gave it to my sister Dora's husband.

Mother had insisted on flying to California. Dora said, "It's not safe."

"Nonsense," Mother replied. "Elda flies everywhere. What's good enough for her is safe for me."

Dora extracted a promise that she wouldn't leave the plane at any of the stops until it reached Los Angeles, but Mother didn't promise not to look out of the window. So the minute the plane took off, she filled her vision with mountains, plains, and the beauty and glory of America. She was too busy looking to cat-nap, and was so thrilled with what she'd seen that when I met her at the airport you'd have thought she was twenty-five.

Our picture stars meant nothing to her. She didn't recognize their faces or their names. I introduced her to Hedy Lamarr. "You're beautiful," said Mother. "You should be in pictures."

"Mother," I insisted, "this is Hedy Lamarr."

"Well, she could change her name; you did, Elda."

Then Hedy, whose mother had recently arrived from Germany, asked how Mother liked the train trip West.

She replied proudly, "I came by plane. It's the only way to travel." Bless her heart, she'd never seen the inside of one until she stepped aboard for the trip to Hollywood.

The night Paris fell, Ken Murray escorted Mother and me to the première of *All This and Heaven Too*. At that opening three mothers stood together. They made quite a picture. Bette Davis's mother from New England, Charles Boyer's mother, who had escaped from Paris ten days before, and mine from Pennsylvania. Without any boasting, I can truthfully say mine was the most beautiful.

Her naturally wavy black hair had turned white, but her brown eyes still held their sparkle. She was dressed in black chiffon trimmed with white lace, and wore a spray of orchids on her shoulder. Gloves covered her toilworn hands. She'd had a manicure for the first time in her long life and was fascinated by the nail polish.

"Why," she smiled as she looked at herself in a full-length mirror, "I'm just like a movie star! I wish Dad could see me tonight."

As is our custom at premières, there was an intermission. Mother rose and said, "Good. Now we can go home."

"The picture's only half over," I said.

"Long, isn't it?" she replied as she sat down again.

Later we went to supper at Ciro's with Edgar Bergen and Ken Murray. Edgar ordered champagne; my mother ordered milk, and I followed suit.

She loved looking at the pretty stars, as she might enjoy a rosebush in her own garden. But she heard not a word that was spoken.

Next morning she asked if they were important people we'd had supper with.

"That was Edgar Bergen, Mother."

She looked at me unknowing. "On your radio you've heard him as Charlie McCarthy."

"Was that Charlie McCarthy? Why, he doesn't look a bit like he sounds."

"The other man was Ken Murray—a famous comedian."

"He looked sad for a funny man," said my mother.

She stayed with me for months. One of her favorite people was Laura Hope Crews, who invited us for a week end at her Santa Monica home.

In the middle of the night I thought I heard a sound in the dressing room which connected our rooms and got up to look. There was my mother looking out over the ocean.

"Whatever are you doing this for?" I asked.

"I just love to look at the Pacific—it's so big."

We drove along the beach and she was fascinated by the campfires of picnickers and thought how fortunate the young people of California were to have a playground so near their homes. Why, at home you travel miles to go fishing in a river!

On the night of her birthday we gathered together those she'd learned to love: Laura Hope Crews, Janet Gaynor and Adrian, Newell Van Derhoef, John Roach, Frances Marion, Jessie Christian, and Dema Harshbarger. Mother was covered with orchids from her shoulder to her waist. Adrian had given her a box of tuberous begonias, which she kept beside her the whole evening.

While greeting the guests, Mother overheard me tell them we were celebrating her eighty-fourth birthday. I thought it was. But she turned to Dema and whispered, "You know, I'm really eighty-five. But if it helps Elda any to say that I'm eighty-four, I don't mind."

Two of the guests thought, as I had, to send her singing telegrams. To this day I've never received one on my own birthday. When the first one arrived, the messenger boy came into the dining room and I explained what it meant. She was so pleased. When the second one arrived, Mother sang

with him. When the third messenger came in, she started to sing before he could begin. He let her carry through to the end, then said, "Lady, I thank you. I can't sing as nice as you, so I didn't try. I'll tell 'em back at the office that you delivered your own telegram."

I offered her a glass of champagne. In all her life she'd never sampled anything except elderberry wine, which she made herself. She refused, but I insisted. She looked reprovingly at me over the rim of her glass as though I'd led her into mortal sin. After the first sip, she took another, then finished the glass. "Why, it doesn't taste a bit like vinegar, and it's not as strong as my wine."

I didn't know how she would receive the beauty kit Dema gave her, because there was no vanity in her. She was pleased as punch. Later I heard the story. My maid had related to Dema how Mother had watched me every morning as I put on my make-up. When I'd gone, she did everything to her face that I'd done to mine. So Dema bought her the works. When she left for home she carried it on the plane in her hand. It was too precious to be checked with her luggage.

We spent Easter at the Yucca Loma Ranch on the Mojave Desert, and on Easter Sunday morning I took Mother for a drive. The floor of the desert was covered with every colored wild flower. We left the car and walked among them. Mother said, "This is the first Easter I've missed going to church since my childhood. I like being with you and Bill and your friends, but I do miss our minister and my church."

"Mother," I said, "look about. The snow-covered mountains in the distance, at our feet a carpet of wild flowers, overhead a cloudless sky. Have you ever seen a church as beautiful as this setting? You don't have to worship indoors. You can worship God right here. This is His Cathedral."

She looked at me thoughtfully and said, "I never thought of it that way." Slowly she got down on her knees and bent her head. Elda Furry knelt and prayed beside her.

Before boarding the plane for home she said, "Since I've seen how you live now, I won't have to include you in my prayers *every* night."

"You mean to say you still pray for me?" I asked.

"Of course. I have ever since you were born."

I wrote a column about Mother after she died, and included this story. Not long ago I called on Trixie Friganza, the well-known musical-comedy star, who lives at the Flintridge Sacred Heart Academy. She's almost bedridden from arthritis, but loves living in the school because of her contact with the

Good Sisters and her daily visits from the lovely young girls starting their education.

As I sat beside her, she opened a scrapbook and took out the column I'd written about Mother.

"This is the best thing you ever wrote," Trixie said. "And I think you should know that since her death I've taken over for your mother. I say a prayer for you every night."